

NEEDFUL THINGS

Screenplay by

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From the Novel by

Stephen King

SECOND REVISED FIRST DRAFT  
July 8, 1992

NEEDFUL THINGS

FADE IN:

A MOVING POINT OF VIEW...perhaps from an automobile....a glorious fall day in New England gliding by quite lyrically, just a breath slower than reality...

...intoxicating us as we watch some TITLES come and go and listen to those Byrds singing high in the trees...

THE BYRDS

To everything, turn, turn...  
There is a season, turn, turn,  
And a time to every purpose  
under heaven...

DISSOLVING ACROSS THIS POV TO ANOTHER as our new view floats up toward a town-line sign...

CASTLE ROCK

A NICE PLACE TO LIVE AND GROW

...and then beyond the sign, to a small cluster of rural houses on the outskirts of town...

THE BYRDS

A time to be born, a time to die  
A time to plant, a time to pluck  
up that which is planted...

THE POV MAKING AN EERIE TURN as it passes to fixate on one house in particular, a run-down '60's ranch...

INT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

CORA RUSK

Well, who the hell opens an antique shop around here after the summer people're gone? A lunatic, that's my opinion.

CORA'S in her kitchen, gabbing on the phone, eating ice cream and reading a tabloid that proclaims "Wax Dummy Found in Elvis' Coffin!"

BRIAN

You want me to make lunch?

Her son BRIAN, eleven, come in with his school books.

CORA RUSK

Turn the microwave on, I'm talkin' to Myra.

INT. THE DOT - DAY

A local luncheonette. And MYRA'S a waitress here. UNDER TITLES. on the phone at a cluttered desk off the kitchen, casually bitching about this ad she's found in The Castle Rock Call...angels. trumpets. a ruffled border...

MYRA

Just another shit shop with a lotta phony furniture an' crap, you wait an' see.

POLLY

Myra. No personal calls now, right?

That's hands-on owner of The Dot, POLLY CHALMERS. jump-starting her God's-Gift-to-Waitressing employee...

INT. THE MELLOW TIGER - DAY

HUGH

Got a sissy comin' to town, lookit them pretty little halos.

The ad's in here too, The Castle Rock Call spread out on proprietor HENRY BEAUFORT'S bar top, being read by HUGH PRIEST. A sad specimen, Hugh's employed by Castle Rock's Department of Public Works. So what's he doing in here, in uniform, having a beer at noon? It's his lunch.

HUGH

One for the road.

HENRY

Not today.

HUGH

How 'bout tomorrow? "Grand Opening Tomorrow. Needful Things." Let's celebrate! That's what I need, a bottle in fronta me or a frontal lobotomy...

The last bit delivered as Hugh Priest takes his leave...

EXT. THE MELLOW TIGER - DAY

...and gets whacked with a blast of dazzling fall sunshine in the parking lot...AS THE NOW DEFINITELY SPOOKY POV picks him up in passing, seems to study Hugh and his unsteady steps for a fleeting moment before it motors on by...

THE BYRDS

A time to kill, a time to heal...

AGAIN THE POV DISSOLVING. and now it spies on Castle Rock's wonderful town common ringed with fall foliage so dazzling you have to gasp...its Baptist church fronted by two of the noblest old red maples the good Lord ever grew...

THE BYRDS

A time to break down, a time to  
build up

This lyric landing us smack on Our Lady of The Serene Waters...Castle Rock's one Catholic Church...a matter of great interest to THE POV as it beams in on the church's FUNCTION HALL where...

INT. CATHOLIC FUNCTION HALL - DAY

...at least a HALF DOZEN of the town's most community-conscious WOMEN gather around a grand folding table to make carnival decorations and dissect the latest gigantic development in their complex lives...

RUTH ROBERTS

Nobody knows who the new shop owner's gonna be or even what he looks like because Walter says Tom Hendricks just got this phone call out of the blue from some man long distance that said, "Will you be my lawyer and help me rent the old Maine State Realtors Building and employ some men to fix it up, I'll be coming in October," and Walter says Tom took the job because, hey, doesn't everyone need money? Lookit our poor church.

Whew. Ruth never took a breath. Around the room freshly painted placards for a Catholic fund raiser called "Casino Nite" stand prominent.

JANET FLYNN

Not those Baptists. They don't need money. Didn't you see them awful buttons Reverend Rose got made up to stop poor Father Brigham? Cost a pretty penny those ones did.

RUTH ROBERTS

You don't stop Father Bringham with a button. He'll just push Rev. Willie Rose right off a cliff and send him straight to hell.

DORIS FLYNN

Ruth! My God!

EXT. MAIN STREET WALL - DAY

SAY NO TO THE DEVIL:

It's a bumper sticker, and it's being plastered across a Casino Nite poster already in place on the wall...this angry protest slammed up by a man of God, the REVEREND WILLIE ROSE who carries a whole fistful of the stickers ...his pockets loaded down with the aforementioned buttons which he's trying to force onto SEVERAL CITIZENS as our PROWLING POV comes upon this scene, skewering the Reverend and studying him in passing just like it did Hugh Priest...

...before it travels off and quickly finds another encounter of interest...a large-boned woman called WILMA JERZYCK venting her temper at a much smaller man, one DEPUTY SHERIFF NORRIS RIDGEWICK...

WILMA

I pay taxes, I pay your salary, you  
pull these goddamn Baptist things  
down.

Wilma's referring to another wall plastered with anti-Casino-Nite fliers, angry, crazily stuck up...

NORRIS

Ain't a public building, Wilma.  
Ain't part of my jurisdiction, is  
it?

WILMA

Well, it's part of mine!

Wilma strikes like a savage beast, her bare hands slashing and ripping the offending protest literature off the wall of a barber shop called...

INT. THE CLIP JOINT - DAY

...where one of its customers, FRANK JEWETT, freshly clipped, is counting his change and peeking out at...

FRANK JEWETT

Poor little Norris. I think Wilma's  
having him for lunch again.

The place is bustling, TWO BARBERS chopping and buzzing away, MEN gossiping and reading newspapers...Frank Jewett going out the door as LESTER PRATT comes in...

LESTER PRATT

This damn new shop here. You see this ad fulla angels? "Grand Opening Tomorrow." Sally can't wait to run in there an' give 'em all my money.

A man pipes up, overweight and smoking a cheap cigar. jovially tousling Lester's noggin...

KEETON

Your money? She makes a bundle more than you do, Lester.

DANFORTH KEETON, III, to be precise, Head Selectman, otherwise occupied with a Daily Racing Form and a pay phone, his call going through at long last...

KEETON

Ralphie? Dan Keeton. I'm taking a serious look at the fifth down to Lewiston. Gloria Darling to win.

LESTER PRATT

Means she'll lose.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

THE CREEPY POV AGAIN. It's gotten an eyeful and an earful so far as TITLES START WINDING UP and it slows to a crawl, looking at store fronts across the street, finally coming to rest on the subject of all this abuse and curiosity... "NEEDFUL THINGS." A big green awning above two large windows soaped over from inside canopies this most ordinary shop. And there's a pleasant sign too, pressed against the glass...

GRAND OPENING TOMORROW  
OCTOBER 9TH  
BRING YOUR FRIENDS

But now the POV moves abruptly off all this, swings to the right for a look up Main Street...and in doing so reveals itself to be A DRIVER'S POINT OF VIEW as the windshield and rearview mirror of this rather unremarkable older American car we've been sitting in fills our field of vision.

And dangling from its mirror? The most wonderful LITTLE SILVER BELL...that suddenly jangles. A warning. There's a car approaching. A Sheriff's car...

INT. SHERIFF'S CAR - DAY

ALAN FANGBORN'S driving, and it's as though he senses the POV that's upon him, throwing his glance quickly that way,

out then just as quickly having to resort to his own rearview...

...which shows him only an old station wagon crossing Main and parking carefully in front of that new store everyone thinks is opening tomorrow.

THE BYRDS

A time to love, a time to hate  
A time of war, a time of peace  
I hope it's not too late...

Alan slides his car into a slant space in front of Western Auto and just sits there for a moment. He takes a deep breath. He feels his shirt pocket. Panics. Digs into his pants pocket. Got it. A small box. He opens it up. The engagement ring's still there.

NORRIS

We got a problem.

Norris! His head right inside the passenger window as Alan hops out...

EXT. WESTERN AUTO - DAY

ALAN

I gotta go see Polly now, Norris.

NORRIS

Wilma Jerzyck's rippin' down fliers  
an' talkin' about murdering  
Baptists. What do you want me to do  
about it?

ALAN

Give Buster Keaton a ticket.

There's a garish red Cadillac parked a short ways off, nagging at Alan now that he's spotted it.

ALAN

He's in the goddamn handicapped  
space again.

Norris sees it now too...

NORRIS

You don't want that pleasure  
yourself?

But Alan's already walking off...

ALAN

I told you. I'm goin' over to see  
Polly, I'm too nervous....I got a  
ring this time.

NORRIS

Get outta here, no way.

INT. THE DOT - DAY

NETTIE

Oh, my God, there's an awnin' on the  
new store!

Polly's behind the grill, and Myra's waiting CUSTOMERS, and  
NETTIE COBB's at The Dot's front window. Wearing awfully  
thick glasses and dressed in her usual food-stained scrub  
dress, and holding her usual apple peeler and half-peeled  
apple, Nettie's peering out through venetian blinds that've  
been hanging here since 1974.

NETTIE

There's still soap on all the  
windows because they're hiding  
something.

POLLY

It's okay, Nettie. It's just gonna  
be some kind of antique shop.

NETTIE

Right where Western Maine Realtors  
and Insurance Agents used to be? It  
looks scary. I'm never goin' over  
that side of the street again if  
AAAHH!

A BIG FACE right up at the glass!

EXT. THE DOT - DAY

Alan Pangborn's face. He was just peeking in, but now  
there's an overgrown puppy YARK! YARK! YARKING! at him,  
straining at a leash that tethers it to the luncheonette...

ALAN

Hey, Raider, cool it, pal...

And Nettie's outside in the blink of an eye, calming her  
irritating little dog, getting it to drink from its cute  
little bowl.

ALAN

Where's Polly at? She inside?



NETTIE

Well, of course she is. Where else.  
It's lunch time.

There's a bright yellow button on Nettie's dress...one of  
Reverend Rose's "SAY-NO-TO-THE-DEVIL!" numbers.

INT. THE DOT - DAY

The Sheriff walks in, heads for the crowded counter...

POLLY

Smoked turkey on rye?

ALAN

No...I'll have maybe one of your  
Specials today, I'm feeling kinda  
special today.

POLLY

You're feeling kinda special? You  
get the pictures back from the  
drugstore?

ALAN

Did I say that? I meant it's  
feeling kinda special. I'll have,  
what's that? I'll have the salami,  
provolone, lettuce, tomato, mayo,  
an' two kinds of mustard in a pita  
pocket.

POLLY

I wouldn't.

ALAN

Awful, huh? Okay, smoked turkey on  
rye plus a giant piece of Nettie's  
apple pie. Hiya, Jack. Eddie.

Alan's saying his hellos to the regulars while Polly gets  
down to business on his sandwich...

ALAN

I tell you I got those pictures back  
from the drug store?

NETTIE

"You won't believe your eyes."

Nettie has The Call opened up for Alan, and she wants him  
to study that ad with all the angels and trumppers...

NETTIE  
"Needful Things. A New Kind of  
Store. You won't believe your  
eyes." Says so right here.

ALAN  
So who's the new owners anyway?

POLLY  
Nobody really knows. Not from  
around here, that's all.

MYRA  
Some shysters from down South, is  
what I think. That's what Cora Rusk  
tol' me. Florida or somewheres,  
maybe Iowa.

POLLY  
Southern Iowa. You better go over  
there, Sheriff, pay your official  
welcomes, an' report back here with  
some serious dirt.

MYRA  
Leave your wallet in the car when  
you go in there.

ALAN  
Don't have to, Myra, I don't need  
anything this year.

POLLY  
Well, thank you.

NETTIE  
Everybody needs something, Sheriff.

The way Nettie says it, with that big sharp knife in her  
hand again...it chills you.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

RUTH ROBERTS  
You're supposed to be in school.  
Does your mother know you're not in  
school, Brian?

We met Ruth Roberts not so long ago in the Catholic  
Function Hall, making Casino Nite decorations, but right  
now she's busy challenging Brian Rusk.

BRIAN  
I got a cold.

And he's around her, off down the sidewalk. Looking through a pack of baseball cards he just...squeak. squeak. What was that? Brian's in shadow, under that brand-new green awning. In front of those soaped-over windows. And didn't somebody just rub off a swath of that soap? So he could peek inside...?

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

The floor's covered in a rich wall-to-wall carpet, and a number of handsome display cases stand smartly around the large room. Thin light filters in, silhouetting young Brian as he dares to press his nose against the glass...

EXT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

CLICK! Brian hops back a pace, all innocence, his eyes flicking toward the front door. But the door's still closed. Except was that sign always there? The small square one with red letters on a white background?

OPEN

...it says. Brian can't resist. His hand moves toward the door knob...his fingers curl around the shiny brass...and he twists.

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

The door inches inward with a satisfying c-r-e-a-k...and Brian follows. If it was bright outside, it's dark in here...murky, spooky...haunted. In the kid's mind anyway.

Brian walks as quietly as he can, coming closer and closer to the display cases, creeping himself out...but there aren't any dismembered bodies or weapons of torture in those cases, just boring odds and ends, costume jewelry, a funny pair of sunglasses, a doll, a BELL TINKLES!

BRIAN

Who's there?

GAUNT

Me.

Brian Rusk spins around!

BRIAN

Who the hell are you?

A TALL FIGURE, what at first seems to Brian an impossibly tall figure, hung back in shadow.

GAUNT

Who're you?

11

The figure flips on a few track lights and moves forward, revealing a face that allays our fears. LELAND GAUNT. A very kind face.

BRIAN

The door was unlocked. I didn't bust in.

GAUNT

Of course it's unlocked. I'm open.

BRIAN

But everybody thinks not until tomorrow...

Gaunt walks right past him, over to the big cloudy window.

GAUNT

Who's that? Who on earth are those people?

And now he wants Brian to come peek out the soap smears with him, at a stocky lady and a WIRY, WEATHERED MAN hefting feed bags into their van outside the Supply Depot.

BRIAN

That's Wilma Jerzyck and her husband Pete.

GAUNT

What're they up to, you suppose?

Leland Gaunt looks down upon Brian Rusk, smiles and seems to x-ray the little kid all at once.

BRIAN

Buyin' feed for their turkey farm...?

It's like Brian's being tested. And he passed.

GAUNT

My name is Leland Gaunt. Put 'er there.

Gaunt wants to shake hands, make everything official now, and his smile's so infectious that Brian drops his guard...

BRIAN

Nice meetin' you.

GAUNT

Nice "meetin'" you too, young fella. Now what would you fancy?

BRIAN

Fancy?

GAUNT

Fancy. Everything that's here's for sale. but not everything that's for sale is here.

(a wink)

I have a basement.

Such a weird dude. Brian's thinking, but a nice guy in his own funny way...

BRIAN

Are you from overseas somewhere?

GAUNT

I am from Akron.

BRIAN

Where's that. in England?

GAUNT

That is in Ohio. Now what'll it be?  
A dirt bike?! Yes!

BRIAN

I got one...

A dirt bike? You couldn't buy one of those in here anyway, could you?

GAUNT

Then a Walkman? Air Jordans?

BRIAN

Well, I...don't know...sure...

GAUNT

Sure what? Those are just objects, aren't they? Forgive me. Just things. But if instead I were to ask, "Suppose you had one wish....?" Then what would you say?

BRIAN

A wish...?

GAUNT

Just one. To make you happy. What would make you happy again? Think quickly! Answer me!

Jesus!

BRIAN

My father: I want my father..

Aha. Gotcha.

GAUNT

Why? I won't hurt you.

BRIAN

No, I mean for my wish. He's gone.  
He left me.

Gaunt looks hard at the boy...

GAUNT

Not you, Brian. He left your  
mother.

...and moves gracefully over to a dozen old cardboard boxes overflowing with crumpled newspaper. He starts unwrapping odds and ends as a nervous Brian Rusk catches a glimpse of the contents of another weird showcase. This one featuring a big meerschau pipe, a Polaroid camera, a bust of Elvis Presley...

BRIAN

My mother loves Elvis...

GAUNT

Your father. Your father. That's a  
tall order. How do we start? What  
could I possibly have around here  
that...?

BRIAN

Sandy Koufax.

Gaunt looks puzzled. He may or may not be.

BRIAN

The baseball player.

GAUNT

Way before your time, wasn't he?

BRIAN

I meant a baseball card...my dad...

GAUNT

Topps or Fleers?

This is razzling and dazzling...

BRIAN

Topps. We had a whole collection of '56 baseball cards. My dad started me on 'em before he...

GAUNT

Al Kaline? Mel Parnell? Roy Campanella? Guys of that caliber?

BRIAN

We got over fifty already. Al Kaline was thirty-eight bucks.

GAUNT

Wow. Except, whew, Sandy Koufax? Ninety? Maybe even a hundred bucks.

BRIAN

Well, you asked me...

GAUNT

Quite right. Sit tight.

Bang and he's gone, down the basement stairs!

EXT. THE DOT - DAY

Alan Pangborn's in a booth with Polly. He's barely touching his smoked turkey, watching her flip through a packet of snapshots just back from the lab...

POLLY

Oh my God, I look awful. Lookit my butt.

ALAN

(the Big Moment)

Polly, you know how you always say I'm never really serious...?

The little ring box. Alan's put it right between them on the table...but those damn pictures have her undivided attention...

POLLY

It's your camera. It's not me or I'm committing suicide.

ALAN

Polly, will you marry me?

POLLY

Sure. Whenever you're serious about it.

ALAN

Look in the box...please.

She's looking behind her instead...

POLLY

I gotta go keep an eye on Nettie  
before she burns the French fries  
again an' puts me in the poor house.  
(turning back)

What's in the funny little box?

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

Elvis. That lip curling out at us from the showcase  
...curling out at Brian too...

GAUNT

Sandy Koufax!

Right behind him!

GAUNT

Topps. 1956. Signed.

Gaunt's hair's a trifle disarranged, and there's a smudge of  
dust on his cardigan. In his hands he's got a single  
baseball card in a plastic sleeve.

GAUNT

"To my good friend Brian."

BRIAN

"Brian"? That's impossible. That's  
my name...

GAUNT

"With best wishes, Sandy Koufax."

Leland Gaunt draws the perfect card from its protective  
plastic...sets it in Brian's hand...and the kid just stares  
at it, numb, mesmerized...

GAUNT

Well, then. How much would you pay  
for this card? So that when your  
father comes home...

BRIAN

I can't...all I got is...



GAUNT

Shhh! Bite your tongue! If you  
can't tell a lie, then be still!  
It's the first rule of fair trade.  
Master Brian.

INT. THE DOT - DAY

Polly comes into the kitchen, the jewelry box in hand.  
Alan following...

ALAN

Well....?

She turns around, looks at him...

POLLY

I can't breathe...

ALAN

It's not as great as it looks. I  
bought it off the TV.

They're in a corner...he would seem to have her.

POLLY

Liar. Put it on.

ALAN

No. It's for you.

POLLY

I mean put it on my...

He is, taking the ring out of the box, slipping it on  
her...

POLLY

Jesus! Ow!

Alan pulls back. The ring's on, but there's such pain in  
Polly's hand...

ALAN

What, they're bad again?

POLLY

Just out of the blue...

ALAN

So put the splints on.

POLLY

Not at work. God, it hurts...

ALAN

Hey, who cares? It's your place.  
Where is it? Where's your purse?

He knows where it is. in the bottom drawer of that desk Myra was phoning from. And when Alan goes to fetch it. Polly takes a pill bottle from a cabinet. takes a tablet with a quick gulp of water before he's back...

ALAN

Put 'em on or you're under arrest  
for disturbing my peace of mind.

Polly opens her purse, finds the splints, fingerless gloves to immobilize her painful hands.

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

Brian's putting change on Gaunt's counter. This is something of a duel between them now. More? Another quarter. Must be seventy-five, eighty-five cents they're talking about already.

GAUNT

Aha, we're getting somewhere! But there's two prices for this card, Brian. Half...and half. One half is cash. The other is a prank. Do you understand?

BRIAN

Yes. No.

GAUNT

You remember that lady we peeked at a while back? Wilma Jerzyck?

BRIAN

Wilma, sure.

GAUNT

The turkey farmer.

INT. THE DOT - DAY

Alan's at the register, paying his fiance...this simple task almost too difficult for Polly even with the splints in place.

POLLY

Can you believe this? I mean how come now of all times?

ALAN

Because it's arthritis. So are you gonna go see Dr. Van Allen?

POLLY

All he can do is write me more prescriptions.

FRANK JEWETT

(coming in)

Hey, Alan, Polly. What's new?

ALAN

We're getting married.

FRANK JEWETT

Ha, when hell freezes over.

EXT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

Brian Rusk emerges into the sharp autumn sunlight, so obsessed with his precious new possession that...SCREECH!  
A Public Works pickup slams on its brakes!

HUGH

Next time I'll just run you down,  
make you squeak, little buddy.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Norris Ridgewick's adjusting his tie in the mirror and wagging his eyebrows approvingly when he catches a flash of movement behind him in the mirror. Too late. Hands grab his ears, spin him around, and bonk his head off the wall! Danforth Keeton.

KEETON

Is that your name on this goddamn ticket, Ridgewick? Or maybe it's a forgery, huh?

NORRIS

You were parked in the cripp space  
...you can't come in here an'...

A bright pink traffic citation wagging in his face...

KEETON

The what?

NORRIS

The handicap space! An' you been told about it before too, Buster, an' you know it.

KEETON

What did you call me? Did you call me "Buster Keaton"? Did you?

NORRIS

You touch me again, I'll throw you in a goddamn cell, I mean it.

KEETON

It's "Danforth"! "Danforth Keaton the third." Who as Head Selectman in this pisspot little town can get your ass fired the hell off this police force in two, make that one second flat. Huh? Got that?

ALAN

I was the one told him to write the ticket.

Keeton stiffens. He knows who's behind him.

KEETON

Oh, well then, my mistake, huh?

ALAN

Jesus, Dan, what in the hell's got into you today?

Keeton comes close, talks so weirdly, so calmly your skin crawls...

KEETON

Nothing's got into me. I'm just a little tired of self-important little pricks...

ALAN

That's enough.

KEETON

...because I try to do a lot for this town, I accomplish a lot for this town, hell, I am this town. And I am sick of the constant persecution.

NORRIS

I ain't perse...

Alan's raised hand shuts Norris up. This is a troubled man.

KEETON

He called me "Buster." You know how I feel about that.

ALAN

He'll apologize. Won't you, Norris?

Crisis management, Pangborn-style.

NORRIS

I don't know that I will.

ALAN

You will! Now!

Silence. Do not disobey this Sheriff.

NORRIS

I'm sorry. I'm sorry I was only standing there looking in the mirror to make sure my tie was straight.

KEETON

Pretty boy, candy ass little dickhead...

NORRIS

Shut up, you bloated cigar-suckin' used car salesman.

Alan jumps between them. As they knew he would. But then...

ALAN

You know, I moved here to be in a place where people didn't lock their doors, where maybe they actually got along an' my biggest nightmare was gonna be getting some goddamn cat out of a tree. But forget about that, huh? Everyone's insane every where. So you guys just fight it out 'til one of you kills the other.

He turns around and...

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - DAY

...comes into the main room. Sounds of battle behind him? No way. You could hear a pin drop. Alan looks at his secretary SHEILA RATCLIFF...at another of his deputies, JOHN LA POINTE.

ALAN

I thoughta be in Pittsburgh.

Keeton appears.

KEETON

Hey, we're adults, right? Can we do something about this ticket or not?

The thing dangling from the Head Selectman's fat fingers.

ALAN

Yeah. You can pay it.

INT. THE DOT - NIGHT

Polly Chalmers is locking up...suffering a stab of pain in her wrist...

ALAN

Any second thoughts yet?

Well, that came out of nowhere. There he is, standing on the sidewalk five feet behind her, in his civilian clothes, no less.

POLLY

I figure you'll do.

Her arm's in his...an easy physicality between these two as they walk, the Sheriff and his girlfriend closing up Main Street, passing under the new green awning...

POLLY

Rumor is Dan Keeton went ballistic on you and Norris this afternoon.

ALAN

We had words.

Arms around each other, kidding and loving each other, they move off...and we HOLD ON the front window of NEEDFUL THINGS as their laughter trails away...

GRAND OPENING TOMORROW  
OCTOBER 9TH  
BRING YOUR FRIENDS

The sign's back.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MORNING

Nettie Cobb...standing on the curb in front of The Dot, a cake box in one hand, her little dog Raider on a leash in the other.

POLLY

Go on now, you go over there. He  
won't bite.

Polly's back at The Dot's door, urging the anxious, timid  
lady forward... Nettie's little dog pulling her forward...

NETTIE

But what'll I say?

POLLY

Introduce yourself.

INT. THE DOT - MORNING

MYRA

Think she'll do it? Bet she won't.

Polly's come back inside, joined Myra at the venetian  
blinds, both of them watching Nettie make her terrified  
advance across Main Street...

POLLY

Sooner or later she's gotta.  
There's a whole world out there.

EXT. NEEDFUL THINGS - MORNING

The silver bell TINKLES as Nettie slips in, past TWO,  
EXITING WOMEN thrilled to death with their new-bought  
treasures tucked away in rumpled old grocery bags provided  
by...

...Leland Gaunt who works his Kingdom like a wizard,  
attending to the questions of the other three customers in  
here now, Ruth Roberts and Wilma and Pete Jerzyck...Pete  
poking his nose into a corner filled with fishing gear,  
Wilma jabbing around in a trunk of rusty tools.

WILMA

What's this? This some old wood  
chisel?

There's a sudden low GROWL, from Raider to Wilma! Gaunt  
spins around, spots Nettie...

GAUNT

Oh my God, I didn't think we had  
room for another soul in here.

He's so nice, but...

WILMA

Your stupid dog yips at me one more time. I won't bother complainin' to Sheriff Pangborn again. I'll come over your house, cut out a little pink tongue myself.

PETE

That's enough, honey, com'on...

Raider snaps! Wilma lurches back, wood chisel in hand, pointed at the animal.

GAUNT

No. Not in here, dear God, please...

WILMA

Throw her face in the street.

GAUNT

I will not. Let's all be friends. Can't we all be friends?

WILMA

Not on this earth.

Clang! Wilma hurls that chisel back into the trunk and rumbles off...Pete dutifully following...

GAUNT

Excuse me, ladies...

And he goes out after the Jerzycks. Leaving Nettie alone and embarrassed with a mortified Mrs. Roberts. Nettie turns her back on the Catholic woman, tries to lose herself in the merchandise...and spies a splendid four-inch-tall Hummel PORCELAIN FIGURINE...a tiny Dutch schoolboy.

GAUNT

Pick it up. Go ahead.

Nettie jumps a foot! He's back and right behind her.

GAUNT

Go on...don't be afraid, Miss Cobb.

NETTIE

I couldn't. I had one just like it, years ago...but it got broke, my husband...

GAUNT

Your husband? Then it's Mrs. Cobb?



NETTIE

Yes...although my George has been passed on for some time now...an!

Like a shot, Gaunt drops to his knees, to pamper little Raider. His rhythms so unsettling...

GAUNT

I'm sorry to hear that. That's a good dog, that's a good little Raider. I don't know why ol' Wilma Jerzyck hates you so much.

NETTIE

No need to be sorry. It's been fourteen years since he was...

GAUNT

A short time. Murder is awful.

Gaunt knows so much, reveals it so diabolically...

NETTIE

I didn't do it.

GAUNT

Of course not. It wasn't you who took that meat fork from the drawer and stuck it in Mr. Cobb's throat. Are you leaving, Mrs. Roberts?

A sale going out the door...

RUTH ROBERTS

I have to think about it. It's so much money.

GAUNT

Think about it. Think about it. So will I. Perhaps the price is a bit unrealistic...

TINKLE, TINKLE and Ruth's gone...charmed.

GAUNT

You baked this?

Suddenly they're all alone, all Gaunt's considerable attention focussed on Nettie.

NETTIE

Of course, homemade every day from apples picked down to McSherry's. My boss Polly Chalmers sent it over to...

GAUNT

Poor Polly. How do her hands feel today?

He's so easy to talk to, so familiar with everyone...

NETTIE

Awful, they been acting up awful since yesterday when she got engaged to Sheriff Pangborn.

GAUNT

Tsk, tsk, and with our lovely weather. Do you suppose he can talk? Sometimes I think I can hear the tiniest laugh...

Gaunt's holding that little Hummell schoolboy to his ear... then out to Nettie Cobb.

GAUNT

Go ahead. Take him. Listen.

She can't. She's afraid to.

NETTIE

I told you, I'll drop it again.

Again?

GAUNT

Oh, nonsense, you will not. Go ahead...

(into her hand)

I like you, Nettie Cobb. I won't yell at you like George did.

She takes the porcelain...

NETTIE

I need to go to work, I work across the street at Polly's....I need to...

GAUNT

Then I'll see you when I drop in for a bite. Mr. Keeton eats there most every day too, does he not?

NETTIE

Danforth Keeton?

GAUNT

Our Head Selectman. Have I got my politics straight? He runs this town, no?

NETTIE

He tries to. Except they call him "Buster" behind his back.

Nettie laughs with that revelation, a harsh giggle that seems just a tad hysterical.

GAUNT

Why, pray tell?

NETTIE

Because he can be so awful.

She's still holding the porcelain...and Gaunt's petting its little head with his fingertip, taking everything down to the most intimate whisper...

GAUNT

Well, then someone should play a trick on Buster. Teach him to be nice.

NETTIE

A trick?

Nettie's alarmed, but exactly why it's so hard to...

GAUNT

Just a harmless prank. And he'll never know it was you. He'll think it was someone else, I promise.

Did he really say that? It's like a dream in here. TINKLE! TINKLE! The silver bell...announcing Sheriff Alan Pangborn's arrival. Nettie puts the porcelain down in a panic, almost topples it. Gaunt to the rescue!

ALAN

Hiya, Nettie. Buying something you can't live without?

NETTIE

No.

GAUNT

We're negotiating. Mrs. Cobb's taken quite the shine to this lovely little porcelain of mine.

NETTIE

I have to go to work. Polly will think I died.

Nettie hurries out, pulling Raider after her, ringing the bell...

ALAN

Alan Pangborn. Sheriff around these parts.

It seems like a friendly joke, an icebreaker, and Gaunt takes it as such, the two men shaking hands...

GAUNT

Leland Gaunt. What can I sell you, Sheriff?

Gaunt clutching Alan's hand a beat too long...

ALAN

Me? Nothing. I got everything I need, thanks.

GAUNT

Impossible. I never met a man who didn't want...

ALAN

A hot shower and a cold beer.

Gaunt watches Alan glance around. Perhaps a worthy adversary?

GAUNT

Fair enough. Then maybe you need to get rid of something. I buy and sell. I always require more, can't get enough. It's too early for a beer. How about some pie? Your fiance Polly sent it over.

ALAN

My what?

GAUNT

Such a pretty lady.

Gaunt's disappeared through a curtained doorway at the back of the shop. You can hear him climbing stairs to his living quarters. A chance for Alan to nose around.

ALAN

You met Polly already?

GAUNT'S VOICE

I observed her. Through my windows.  
I've observed almost everybody.  
That's my job. Much like yours.

ALAN

What's that mean. your job...?

Step aside, he's coming back down...with two plates. two  
forks. a knife to cut the pie...

GAUNT

To know my customers. Understand  
their hopes and dreams. Gosh, I  
wish I had some cheddar cheese. but  
beggars can't be choosers, can they?

Bingo, and Alan's got a huge slab of Nettie's pie on a  
plate. So does Gaunt, who stuffs his face, chews with such  
deep, sinful satisfaction...

ALAN

(taking a bite)

When you said Polly was my fiance...  
how'd you hear that?

GAUNT

I don't know that I did. I just  
assumed, well, such a handsome  
couple...you know. We haven't met  
somewhere before, have we?

ALAN

Us? You an' me?

GAUNT

In a big city? You look familiar,  
Al. You look out of place here  
actually.

ALAN

So do you, Leland.

GAUNT

You ever been in Baltimore,  
Maryland?

ALAN

Nope.

They're looking at each other again. They're eating pie.

GAUNT

Me neither.

EXT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

Cora Rusk. She's on the sidewalk staring into the display window as Alan emerges. heads off with a glance back at Cora. And what's caught her attention? Elvis. That bust. It's in the window now, big as life.

INT. SHERIFF'S CAR - MORNING

Alan climbs inside, bothered and unsettled.

POLICE RADIO

Alan, do you copy? Alan, it's Norris, do you copy? Over.

ALAN

What is it?

POLICE RADIO

I got Reverend Rose here, over. He needs talk to you, over.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - MORNING

ALAN'S VOICE

I'll be in the office in a half hour.

Alan's voice squawking at Norris and the Reverend Willie Rose...who grabs the mike himself, preaches as though to millions:

REVEREND ROSE

My God, man, this cannot wait one second more! This is about that Catholic abomination which Father Brigham and his crew are choosing to call "Casino Nite"! I demand you forbid this event in the name of God!

(silence)

All's I got is static! Can he hear me?

INT. SHERIFF'S CAR - MORNING

Not really. Alan's got the vehicle moving, the radio's on, but his mind's somewhere else. Back at that peculiar shop?

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - DAY

SHEILA

One moment please. I'm gonna put you on hold. He just came in.

Sheila Ratcliff's on the telephone, and John La Pointe's doing paperwork as Alan makes his first appearance of the morning...

SHEILA

Congratulations. Some lawyer named Michael Burke at The Bureau of Taxation in the State House in Augusta wants to talk to you.

ALAN

Why "congratulations"? I never heard of the guy.

SHEILA

About you and Polly. About time.

ALAN

Christ, what was it on, CNN? Reverend Rose gone, I hope?

SHEILA

He hadda go torment someone else. Says he'll call you at two thirty an' chew your ear off.

ALAN

Let Norris handle him. Put the tax guy through. Where the hell is Norris anyway?

Alan's heading for his office...

JOHN

Down the Clip Joint gettin' his ears lowered.

INT. ALAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Alan's on the phone. He's been on the phone for a few minutes now, listening and not much liking what he hears.

ALAN

You're sure? I mean there's no way he...

SPEAKER FONE

Polly's out here, Alan. I'm sending her in, okay?

ALAN

What? No...don't, Sheila.

Too late. His door opens. Polly's inside. those splints still prominent on her hands as she gives him a wave and takes a seat on his awful vinyl sofa. Alan swivels his chair around, shutting her out.

ALAN

Look. Look. I can't do that without a search warrant. you know that. Dan Keeton's...I mean the man more or less hired me. for God sake.

There's enough discomfort in his voice and his whole attitude that Polly won't miss a word. She'll only pretend to be leafing through "Modern Law Enforcement," a dog-eared journal on Alan's coffee table.

ALAN

If you guys wanna come down here and investigate him or whatever you do, fine. I'll open my books. That's all I can do. The man's no saint, but these aren't easy times to run any town, and Keeton is what Keeton is. He's a son of a bitch half the time, and so am I.

Alan swivels around, still listening, but at least now there's an awkward smile that acknowledges Polly.

ALAN

Fine then. Whenever you want. You know where I live. Goodbye.

He hangs up. Sits there.

POLLY

Do my ears deceive me or was that Alan Pangborn defending Buster Keeton?

ALAN

Goddamn State tax lawyers. I'd defend Al Capone against 'em. What do you want?

That didn't come out right at all.

POLLY

I don't know. What do you got?

ALAN

Everybody and his uncle knows we're engaged by the way.



POLLY

Oh, was it supposed to be a big secret?

ALAN

Not what I meant, sorry.

SPEAKER FONE

Father Brigham on three.

ALAN

Christ. I gotta take this. We're having a religious war.

POLLY

No problem. I just dropped by to...

ALAN

Father Brigham? Alan. What's up?

(listens)

What? No. But he was in here with Norris, and I was out so I just talked to him on the radio...

Polly's up. He's too busy for her. She's waving goodbye. He's motioning "stay, stay." She throws him a kiss, sexy, lifts her skirt to flash some leg so it'll be all that much harder to talk to...

ALAN

...Father...just a second, Father, I think what if I just come on over there?

He might as well. Polly's gone.

INT. DOT - DAY

Dan Keeton's at the counter, eating, sullen amid the building lunch crowd.

POLLY

That's way too much gravy.

NETTIE

But he said he loved gravy. He said "ladle it on, Nettie."

She's referring to their newest customer, a striking gentleman alone in a booth by the window. Mr. Leland Gaunt. Keeton watches him, fascinated by his silvery hair and his tweed and his hungry, jostling smile.

POLLY

I'll say one thing, he's a handsome man.

NORRIS

You should hear his voice. Wait'll you hear his voice.

Gaunt sits by himself, singing a low, jaunty tune.

GAUNT

When the dog bites, when the bee stings, I always remember my favorite things...

...as sunlight from those venetian blinds paints a most mysterious pattern upon his face. He makes a notation in a little book, adds a name to a growing list of names, some we know, some we don't: Brian Rusk, Nettie Cobb, Cyndi Rose, Sally Pratt...

GAUNT

...and then I don't feel...so bad.

POLLY

Mr. Gaunt? Here you go.

She's got his food. Gaunt lifts his arms as if he's being held up...a gesture to make room for his meal.

GAUNT

Why, you're Polly Chalmers. I'd shake your hand, but I know they've been absolutely killing you lately, haven't they?

POLLY

(thrown)

It's so unpredictable...

GAUNT

That's the pure devil of it, no? So here instead. A tiny thank-you note for that remarkable pie. My Lord, I don't think I have ever smelled a more scrumptious meatloaf!

SALLY

'Lo there, Polly, Mr. Gaunt.

GAUNT

'Lo there, Sally.

That's SALLY PRATT and her husband Lester come into The Dot for lunch, Lester hurrying his wife along to a booth...

POLLY

Well, you're sure making friends fast.

YARK! YARK! Just outside the window Raider starts up! Tethered to his usual spot, he's upset about a new arrival on the sidewalk. Brian Rusk. The boy just standing there, looking in at Leland Gaunt.

GAUNT

A friendly town. What can I say?

EXT. JERZYCK FARM - DAY

A SCREENFUL OF DIRTY WHITE TURKEYS...hundreds of goofy gobblers filling the air with a God-awful sound as...

...Brian Rusk appears in their midst, wades through the birds as he sneaks toward the house...AND A SILVER BELL TINKLES...

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

...to let ANOTHER CUSTOMER in while Myra Evans, of all people, completes a transaction with Leland Gaunt.

MYRA

I'm just so thrilled...

Whatever she's bought, Gaunt's wrapping it in one of his "recycled" sacks, crooning to Myra...

GAUNT

"Brown paper packages tied up with string, these are a few of my favorite things..."

INT. JERZYCK HOUSE - DAY

Brian's face popping up in a window, his eyes darting left and right to confirm that, yes, no one's home. THE SILVER BELL TINKLES...

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

...as Gaunt watches yet another soul nibble his bait. Frank Jewett, who we're about to learn is...

GAUNT

...the principal of Castle Rock High School? I am honored, sir.

FRANK JEWETT

May I see that book?

GAUNT

Take a gander, and if it's too not in here, Mr. Jewett, just say the word. I have a tendency to turn up the heat.

EXT. JERZYCK BACKYARD - DUSK

SPLAT! A snow-white sheet clobbered by a turkey-shit muddie! Brian's in the yard, gobblers scattering as he digs down into their turf again and makes himself a second hell ball and pitches the thing gleefully at Wilma's clothesline, the foul mixture slinging off in a long brown glob that fans out, SPLATTERS across the chest of Pete's white dress shirt! THE SILVER BELL TINKLES...

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

...and Leland Gaunt laughs!

GAUNT

Well, I think we have a deal!

EXT. OUR LADY OF THE SERENE WATERS - DAY

JUST FOR FUN!

JOIN US FOR "CASINO NITE"

OCTOBER 27, 1993

TO BENEFIT THE CATHOLIC BUILDER'S FUND

We get to read most of this because Alan slows down on his way to the church to take the sign in himself.

INT. OUR LADY OF THE SERENE WATERS - DAY

FATHER BRIGHAM

Just mop the marble with a little Mr. Clean in a bucket, Eddie, you don't get that damn streaking.

FATHER BRIGHAM'S talking to the church's custodian, EDDIE WARBURTON, up by the apse. The old priest turns when he hears Alan Pangborn enter his sanctuary.

EXT. CHURCH GARDENS - DAY

Alan's walking with Father Brigham who's reading him a letter as the afternoon melts toward sunset...

FATHER BRIGHAM

"Listen up you Mackerel-Snapper! We have tried to reason with you. But it has been no use. We have put up  
(more)

FATHER BRIGHAM (CONT'D)  
with your Popish idolatry and even  
with your licentious worship of the  
Babylon whore. But now you have  
gone too far."

ALAN  
That was just dropped in your mail  
box, no postmark?

FATHER BRIGHAM  
"HEED OUR WARNING: GIVE UP YOUR PLAN  
TO TURN THIS TOWN INTO A DEN OF  
THIEVES AND GAMBLERS OR YOU WILL  
SMELL THE BRIMSTONE!"

Disgusted, Father Brigham thrusts the letter at Alan, sits  
on a granite bench beneath a marble angel.

ALAN  
(finishing it up...)  
"The wicked shall be turned into  
hell...Psalm 9:17. The Concerned  
Baptist Men of Castle Rock."

FATHER BRIGHAM  
That idiot Reverend Steamboat Willie  
Rose.

ALAN  
Now, Father, I don't think even he'd  
stoop this low to...

FATHER BRIGHAM  
If Rose bumps us, he's gonna find  
out how hard we mackerel-snappers  
can bump back.

ALAN  
That why you called me over? To  
tell me you're gonna fight fire with  
fire? Whatever happened to "Turn  
the other cheek"?

FATHER BRIGHAM  
When I was younger, people got along  
better.

ALAN  
Yeah, that's what I hear. I'll go  
talk to Reverend Rose soon as I get  
a chance, okay? Try to get to the  
bottom of this pretty quick.

FATHER BRIGHAM

If he didn't do it, he's gonna be  
pissed off somebody else thought of  
it first.

EXT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

Speak of the Devil...there he stands. Reverend Willie Rose  
in the flesh. holding a wad of anti-Casino Nite material,  
eyeing Leland Gaunt's front window. He heads inside...

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

...makes the SILVER BELL TINKLE once more. SEVERAL  
SHOPPERS browse while Gaunt works to rearrange a table of  
screw trinkets.

REVEREND ROSE

Mr. Gaunt?

The shoppers fall silent, all the pleasure of their hunt  
driven away by this joyless Reverend.

GAUNT

I am he.

REVEREND ROSE

Reverend Rose, sir. May I take this  
opportunity to welcome you to Castle  
Rock on the Good Lord's behalf?

GAUNT

You may.

The shoppers are leaving, Gaunt seeing that, not liking it,  
but Reverend Rose is in a world of his own...

REVEREND ROSE

Excellent, excellent, and now  
because time is so short...

GAUNT

Oh, I quite agree.

REVEREND ROSE

(thrown)

Pardon?

GAUNT

Time. It's later than we think.

REVEREND ROSE

Indeed! Hence my unusual urgency  
when I ask, "What faith, sir, are  
you?"

GAUNT  
Faith? What ~~faith~~ am I?

REVEREND ROSE  
Faith. Religion. You're not...  
(look left. look right)  
...a Catholic, are you?

GAUNT  
Oh, heavens no!

REVEREND ROSE  
Aha, thank God, I knew it! Then you  
will have little objection to my  
placing this in your front window...

One of those fanatical bumper stickers that shout

SAY NO TO THE DEVIL!

Gaunt regards it. For a moment.

GAUNT  
I couldn't possibly do that.

REVEREND ROSE  
Why? If you're not...

GAUNT  
Because, Reverend, I am here to  
serve everybody!

(a wink...)  
Even those Catholics. I figure  
every dollar I take away from them  
here, that's one less dollar they  
have left to spend on their  
wretched, sinful gambling.

Reverend Rose, out maneuvered, stares at Leland Gaunt's  
miraculous conspiratorial grin.

REVEREND ROSE  
Well, I see your point, but...

GAUNT  
Of course you do! Look around  
yourself. Imagine their greedy,  
bulging little Catholic eyeballs  
lusting after all my wonderful  
temptations...look, look there  
...and there...

Reverend Rose looks. He hasn't got a prayer. THE SILVER  
BELL TINKLES...

EXT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

...and the Reverend emerges with a crumpled bag concealing his new purchase. He moves off down Main Street, through the wide berth given him by the Flynn sisters, Janet and Doris, good Catholics to their souls.

INT. JERZYCK VAN - DUSK

Wilma's driving fast, and Pete's just sitting alongside her, frightened as usual...

PETE

Father Brigham says them Baptists  
just put up their posters to get us  
riled...to get your goat, Wilma.

WILMA

They got it.

EXT. JERZYCK FARM - EVENING

Wilma brakes hard in the front driveway, gets out...

...and A MOMENT LATER here she comes, around the shed, carrying a twenty-five pound sack of feed, snatching a small axe from the bloody stump where she eighty-sixes all those gobblers.

WILMA

I'll just go chop their church to  
little pieces!

Whomp! Wilma drives the hatchet into a tree, heads into the backyard...as poor Pete brings up the rear...

EXT. JERZYCK BACKYARD - EVENING

Wilma...that feedbag on her shoulder obscuring her vision just enough so she doesn't realize the blackness ahead isn't the night. It's her once-white bed linens, now a flapping wall of dark brown slime that Wilma...

WILMA

AAAAAHHHHH!!!

PETE

Wilma!? Wilma, where are you...?

In her clothesline, tangled in sheets that droop from their pins in soggy clots. And Wilma's not just spattered, she's coated, plated with...



WILMA  
...and...and and SHIT!!!

PETE  
Who'd ever....I mean...why?

WILMA  
Because I tol' her I'll kill it!

Crazed. Wilma claws the sheets, starts pulling them down!

PETE  
What...? Who...?

INT. NETTIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A warm bungalow, but its cluttered, confusing decor mirrors the mind of its occupant...who's sitting in her cozy living room gaping at network TV and holding that little pooch Raider in her arms like he was a baby, rocking him in her chair when the PHONE RINGS!!

NETTIE  
Hello, Cobb residence...

WILMA'S VOICE  
I know what you done, you crazy bitch!

The voice spits out like the sudden, gruesome stab of an ice pick, skewers Nettie's simple mind, and paralyzes her face as she holds the ear piece as far away as...

INT. JERZYCK HOUSE - NIGHT

WILMA  
I'm gonna get you for this.  
Understand? You an' your dog!

Pete's watching his muddy, shitty wife. That's all he can do, watch. WHILE WE INTERCUT...

NETTIE  
He hasn't been barking! He's right here in my arms...you leave him alone!

There's a silence now, deep as death. Then Wilma speaks for the last time.

WILMA  
You won't see me comin'.

Click. Nettie looks at the lifeless phone in her hand...AND WE HEAR A SHRILL ELECTRONIC...

INT. CORA RUSK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

...RING OF A TELEPHONE trying to cut through...

ELVIS PRESLEY

One night with you, that's all ahm  
livin' fo...

...playing on Cora Rusk's tape deck next to her bed where she reclines in lonely ecstasy, a red scarf draped over the night-stand lamp...casting a hot crimson glow on Cora and that big bust of Elvis. He's Cora's now, both of them tucked under the covers together.

CORA RUSK

Hello...

(up she sits!)

Well, hello, Mr. Gaunt, yes, I am.  
He's right here next to me singin'  
his little heart out...

(a dirty laugh)

Well, no you cannot! What? Oh.  
Well, sure.

INT. RUSK KITCHEN - NIGHT

Brian's eating alone and watching a small TV set on the counter.

CORA'S VOICE

BRIAN! IT'S MR. GAUNT WANTS TO TALK  
TO YOU.

BRIAN

Me...?

INT. GAUNT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

GAUNT

How's my boy? Did you have a  
successful adventure today?

The apartment's dark, and Gaunt just sits there in his chair, talking quietly and watching a horse race on TV, its sound muted as we INTERCUT...

BRIAN

Okay. I did okay. It was fun.

GAUNT

Wasn't it though? And you did  
miraculously well. You can almost  
keep that card now.

BRIAN

Almost?

INT. CORA RUSK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CORA RUSK

I have to do a favor for Mr. Gaunt tomorrow, El.

Cora turns her head away from the King, lets her cheek flop against the pillow so she can look across at her bureau where the most unusual package sits, modest in size but garishly done up with silver foil and a loopy purple bow.

CORA RUSK

Then we can be together forever.

INT. KEETON CHEVROLET - NIGHT

Lights are on, but the mood is dark. The place is closed, and the Man in Charge is wedged into his little glass cubicle, pouring himself a whiskey while he watches an evening of horse races on TV...just what Leland Gaunt was watching too...

KEETON

Shit! No. No!

Keeton snaps the TV off, a born loser. He looks up!. A FIGURE is standing outside his window, harshly back-lighted.

It's not what we think. It's Alan Pangborn. And a MINUTE LATER he's inside, let in by a nervous, superficially terrific Dan Keeton.

KEETON

Hey, another two seconds I'm out the door. You're lucky you caught me, Al.

ALAN

I don't wanna catch you, Dan. That's why I'm here. I got a call today from the State Auditors.

Keeton's musculature changes, deforms under a great weight.

ALAN

Maybe there's somewhere we can sit down an' talk?

KEETON

I don't sit down anymore. I got a car dealership to run, a family to  
(more)

## KEETON (CONTD)

feed, and a town to manage with practically no tax base but more expenses than New York City.

## INT. POLLY'S CAR - NIGHT

She's driving home, passing through town, caught by a red light at an intersection near enough to Keeton Chevrolet that she can see the Sheriff's car out front...see Alan and Dan inside, locked in some kind of serious discussion.

## INT. KEETON CHEVROLET - NIGHT

## ALAN

We're having an Appropriations Committee meeting next week, dealing with budgetary matters...

Keeton's moving...Alan following...cars between them...

## KEETON

Guess what? It's on my calendar.

## ALAN

They wanna be there, Dan. They want me to get them printouts, shit from City Hall...

## KEETON

Those bastards are just...

## ALAN

(exploding)

WHAT IS GOING ON?!

Keeton jumps back, terrified.

## EXT. KEETON CHEVROLET - NIGHT

Polly's pulling over next to Alan's car. But closer to the dealership now, she can sense more of the tension inside...

## INT. KEETON CHEVROLET - NIGHT

## KEETON

It's Myrtle...I love her an' I need her, an' I don't wanna break her heart, but I been having some bad luck at the track.

He's walking, adjusting stickers, buffing fenders with his coat sleeve...

KEETON

She thinks I'm off the horses. It'd kill her. So I borrowed a little bit from the town's petty cash fund, just to cover the worst of the shortfall.

ALAN

Oh, Jesus. Dan...

KEETON

But I'm gonna pay it back. I was gonna pay it all back before next week, before the Persecutors could get me, honest to God.

Alan wants to be somewhere else, home in bed, at the dentist, anywhere else.

INT. POLLY'S CAR - NIGHT

And so does Polly. The whole thing, whatever it is, looks too unpleasant to interrupt. She leaves the curb, motors off...

INT. KEETON CHEVROLET - NIGHT

ALAN

How much so far? How much are we talking about here?

KEETON

Twenty grand.

Keeton pulls up fast. Alan's got the aisle blocked.

KEETON

But I'm getting a loan on my dealership, to pay it back, from Boston.

ALAN

When?

KEETON

Any day, two days, four days, next week...

ALAN

Four days.

KEETON

Done. Done. If They call before that, you'll stall 'em?

Not a blink:

ALAN

Good night. Dan.

Alan's leaving, right now...

KEETON

Thank you. Alan. thank you. I'll make it worth your while...

ALAN

Like hell you will. Just pay it back. Monday.

KEETON

I only meant I'll give you a deal on your next Chevrolet. That's all I meant, Alan. Swear to God. Hey, whatever you want...for Polly too. She'd be real impressed you get her a deal on this dynamite little red convertible...

The Sheriff's gone, and Danforth Keeton the third's all alone in his glitzy world.

INT. POLLY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

A cook timer CHIRPING. Alan shuts it off, takes a store-bought pizza out of the oven...while Polly sits at the table making her own noise with an old calculator, trying to balance her books.

ALAN

Your oven's not hot enough. The mushrooms look like fur balls.

POLLY

It's twenty-five degrees off. I told you a hundred times.

He sets the pizza in a small clearing on the table, goes to get their beers.

ALAN

You'll like using my oven. My oven's perfect.

POLLY

You're gonna move your stove in here?

ALAN

Course not. We'll live at my place.  
It's cheaper.

POLLY

There's a reason. Shit. I'm going  
broke on pickles and mustard.

Her books. Alan sits. Polly takes a swig. He wants to  
click bottles. A toast:

ALAN

Two can live as miserably as one.

That gets her attention. makes her smile. kiss him.

POLLY

You're sure you wanna go through  
with this? You've been a different  
Alan since I put this on.

The ring. Alan takes her hand. massaging her fingers.  
almost lost in the act because it's one of the few things  
he can really have an effect on.

ALAN

You're in pain, but I feel shitty.

POLLY

Because I'm heavily medicated.

ALAN

You're not taking...

POLLY

Joke. Joke. That was a joke.  
Jesus Christ, you can't smile  
anymore, can you? What's going on  
with Buster Keaton? I saw the two  
of you going at each other tonight.

ALAN

You saw us?

POLLY

I was driving by. I almost poked my  
head in to say hello. But it didn't  
look like fun.

ALAN

It wasn't.

That's all he's saying.

POLLY

Okay. What's really wrong here?

ALAN

It's just a lotta little things this week. People and their stupid problems.

POLLY

Lemme guess. Catholics hate the Baptists. Baptists hate the Catholics. Jesus loves 'em both.

ALAN

So I'm supposed to get in between, get nailed in the crossfire.

POLLY

Everybody has to get in between. It's not easy.

ALAN

Then stop complaining.

POLLY

I wasn't. You were.

ALAN

Was I? No, not me. You got the wrong man.

She leans across the table for another kiss...deep.

POLLY

No way.

INT. THE MELLOW TIGER - NIGHT

HUGH

Politics sucks.

Hugh Priest, seven sails to the wind, sits at the bar helping a tense Dan Keeton on the stool next door bitch in his beer to HENRY BEAUFORT, proprietor.

KEETON

An' you know why? Not because of politicians. Because of Them.

On the jukebox there's a Rodney Crowell record starting to skip...drawing Hugh's fuzzy attention that way...

HUGH

I'm gonna kick that jukebox wide open you don't fix it, Henry.



HENRY  
 changing the subject:  
 How you doin' at the track. Dan?  
 Horses finally runnin' your way?

KEETON  
 Hey, every time. Henry, every  
 goddamn time, don't I wish?

HUGH  
 Guy sounds like he's havin a fuckin'  
 epileptic fit.

Meaning Rodney Crowell on the Rock-Ola. Hugh shoves off  
 his stool to rectify matters. Pow! He whumps that Rock-  
 Ola with one big scuffed yellow work boot! Henry's large  
 hand sets upon Hugh's shoulder, and his voice comes out  
 with deep, experienced finality:

HENRY  
 Don't kick it again, Hugh.

Face-to-face. These two have a history.

HUGH  
 You oughta take that record off,  
 Henry.

Instead Henry sticks his hand right into Hugh's jacket,  
 relieves him of his truck keys.

HUGH  
 Gimme them back!

HENRY  
 (to the room)  
 Any you fellas headin' up to Castle  
 Hill? Hugh needs a lift.

KEETON  
 Hugh needs a pink slip, is what Hugh  
 needs, for a city employee making an  
 ass of himself in a local tavern.

It's a threat. An effective one too. It comes from  
 Keeton's back. He won't even turn to look at Hugh. That's  
 it then. Like he always does, Hugh's painted himself into  
 a corner. Like he always does, he finds a way out.

HUGH  
 Nice to have friends.

Then, with his head up, he passes outside into the  
 darkness. On the other hand...

KEETON

You know what They do, Henry? They come in late at night. They pull out your mirrors...

Specifically, right now, Dan means the big mirror behind Henry's bar.

KEETON

...They replace it with one-way glass an' stick a camera on the other side. An' They watch you.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

A light drizzle is starting to fall by the time Hugh's passing NEEDFUL THINGS. He glances into the sparkling display window and comes to a sudden halt.

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - NIGHT

Hugh stumbles in, reaching up to silence the SMALL SILVER BELL...

GAUNT

Why, you're drenched to your soul!

Hugh spins around! There's a man standing in the middle of the shop.

HUGH

They threw me out...I'm sorry...

GAUNT

Here, here, let me help you peel that thing off before you catch your death.

Gaunt's behind him, skinning a ratty old city work coat from Hugh's shoulders...

HUGH

You got a nice jacket in the window.

GAUNT

A classic early fifties beauty. Warm as toast. Dry as a bone.

HUGH

Just like I used to have when I was in high school before I was a bum. When I was a kid.

GAUNT

There's a lotta people in this  
shitpit of a town wouldn't ever  
believe you were a kid. Hugn.

Gaunt knows his name. He's at the window now, lifting out  
a handsome letterman's jacket.

HUGH

It's not fair. I tried so hard...

GAUNT

But not hard enough. So they  
crushed you, and they buried that  
wonderful little boy deep inside  
you.

HUGH

What little boy....?

GAUNT

This one.

My God, it says "Hugh" on the front of that jacket, and now  
once more Gaunt's come around behind his defenseless  
customer, begun slipping the like-new garment on Hugh, all  
the while talking in the most intoxicating, whispery...

GAUNT

We'll find him again, Hugh. We'll  
resurrect him together, because all  
of a sudden...

Gaunt's hands dart up from behind! They clamp hard upon  
Hugh Priest's shoulders. But his voice never rises.

GAUNT

...it's 1955 all over again. And  
you just got your driver's license.  
And you're cruising back home from  
the Western Maine Schoolboy  
Championship game...

HUGH

...Castle Rock versus Greenspark...

GAUNT

In your dad's Buick convertible...

HUGH

We whipped their asses.

GAUNT

...six of you in the car...a flask  
of Log Cabin whiskey...

The jacket sort of fits....if Hugh doesn't try the zipper. Tears stream down his face as he snuggles the garment, remembering its wonderful smell.

HUGH

But I didn't drink outta that flask.  
I let it go by 'cause I was drivin'.

GAUNT

Because you were responsible for the  
lives of others. Then.

HUGH

The best hour of the best day of my  
life. I loved this jacket.

GAUNT

You could recover. Hugh, go back and  
take charge of your life.

Silence. Heartbreaking silence. And then Gaunt releases his grip...and Hugh returns from his lost childhood...and looks for a moment like he has no idea where he is or how the hell he got that jacket on.

GAUNT

You are a Roman Catholic, are you  
not?

HUGH

Yes...

GAUNT

A Roman Catholic just like Wilma  
Jerzyck.

HUGH

I ain't like Wilma Jerzyck. She's a  
turkey farmer. She stinks.  
(but that jacket...)  
God, this is still so beautiful.

GAUNT

Do you know a Baptist lady called  
Nettie Cobb?

HUGH

Sure. A crazy old rip. How much  
you want for it?

Hugh's wallet coming out...

GAUNT

Leave that where it is, you ass:  
Why is it so many people think all  
the answers lie in their wallets?

HUGH

(cowed)

I don't know...

GAUNT

The world is full of needy people.  
Hugh, and everything is for sale.  
Everything. But for the things  
people really need? Hugh, the  
wallet is no answer.

INT. KID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

By a rain-spattered window we can see a hump in the bed, a  
private world tented over by a soft flannel blanket that  
glows from within. Someone's rattling the locked bedroom  
door...

CORA'S VOICE

Brian, you unlock this right now an'  
stop hidin' from me like your  
goddamn father did! I mean it...  
open up!

Canopied and hidden away by his blanket, the little boy  
sits with a flashlight, looking at one thing only...that  
album of baseball cards he and his dad were collecting. Al  
Kaline. Mel Parnell. Roy Campanella. Guys of that  
caliber. Sandy Koufax...

BRIAN

I won't give it back. Ever.

EXT. NEEDFUL THINGS - MORNING

A new day's begun, and a dark-eyed Dan Keeton's staring at  
something in the front window.

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

KEETON

The box caught my eye. It's a lot  
like the Lewiston Raceway...where I  
go once in a while.

GAUNT

To lose your shirt.

It's not really a joke. Gaunt's taken a board game from his window, set it upon the counter top. WINNING TICKET it's called, and he opens the box and lifts out a tin race-track, a cheap toy made in Japan decades ago. Pressed metal horses stand ready to run the circuit in oval slots.

KEETON

Looks kinda crummy.

GAUNT

You ain't seen nuthin' yet.

Gaunt flips a small metal lever protruding from a hole near the starting line. Did the CROWD JUST ROAR?!

GAUNT

They're off!

Winning Ticket rattles and vibrates, its tin horses racing around in weird little jerks, giving and taking the lead from each other, making a racket as a spacey Dan Keeton watches...HEARS THE DISTANT THUNDER OF REAL HORSES' HOOVES, THE JOCKEYS' WHIPS, THE CREAK OF SADDLE LEATHER...and then it's over.

KEETON

What the hell...? That was pretty fine!

GAUNT

Fine as paint.

KEETON

Lemme try...

GAUNT

Careful! This is no ordinary toy.

KEETON

I'll say. Whaddaya mean?

GAUNT

(a secret)

Know what a Ouija Board is?

KEETON

Predicts the future...?

GAUNT

Well, so does this.

The way Gaunt says it...

GAUNT

The man who sold this to me, his father made a fortune with it. Every morning he'd take the day's Racing Form and run its races before they ever happened, one by one, right on this board. He'd give each tin horse a real name from the paper ...do it just by touching...

(like Gaunt does)

...one of these little fellas and whispering its brand-new name...

KEETON

What, like Citation?

GAUNT

Exactly! Wind 'er up, let 'er go! Run the whole damn slate that way! Give all the horses real names! Eight, ten, a dozen races! Then go right to the track and bet on those fillies that won on this astonishing toy from Japan Incorporated! He'd rake in the cash, Dan! Rake in the cash!

KEETON

Rake in the cash...? --

Silence. Gaunt's pleased as punch.

KEETON

Then...I mean...how come his son ever sold it to you?

GAUNT

(a wink)

He was afraid of it. And so am I.

FIVE MINUTES LATER and the board game's all tucked away in a big grocery sack, and Keeton's watching Leland Gaunt tie it up crudely with string. There. Done. Gaunt hands it to an eager Dan Keeton...yanks it back!

GAUNT

You won't let Pangborn get his paws on this, will you?

KEETON

Alan Pangborn? Of course not... never.

GAUNT

Thank God. Because Pangborn's in league with Them.

KEETON

He is? They're everywhere...

GAUNT

Tell me about it, huh? The town's infested. Full of 'em! I've been open less than a week, and I can smell 'em. I think they may soon be after me too.

Gaunt gives Keeton that brown paper package tied up with string...and seals their fate.

GAUNT

In fact, I'm quite sure of it. And I may need your help.

INT. THE DOT - DAY

Once again the lunch crowd's building, and Polly's cooking, prepping, supervising like she does every day...

...as Wilma Jerzyck comes in, showing no trace of that shit storm she suffered last night. Wilma sits at the counter, amid the regulars, near to where Nettie's chopping potatoes with a great big knife, near enough to make that poor lady tense.

Leland Gaunt. He's a regular now too, sitting a safe distance away in a nearby booth, eating and pretending to read The Call, enjoying every second of...

WILMA

Hey, Corn Cobb, what's that button on your boob?

No response. Nettie plops the potatoes into a deep fryer ...CRASH! She whirls around, knife in one hand, basket of potatoes dripping hot oil in the other. It was a sugar dispenser that Wilma just boldly knocked to the floor right behind her.

NETTIE

You're crazy...you leave me alone...

Polly's just got wind of all this...but she's closer to Gaunt than to Nettie or Wilma so it's Myra who intervenes, makes Nettie lower that knife...

MYRA

What'll it be, Wilma?



WILMA

Raider on rye. Little glass a puppy  
puss an' two nice doggy eyes.

Sam, Nettie's out of there with a gasp, right through the  
luncneonette, right out its front door past Polly and  
Gaunt.

POLLY

Oh, snit...

GAUNT

It's okay, I'll go talk to her.

EXT. TOWN COMMON - DAY

A picture-book New England park, bedazzled with fiery fall  
foliage, leaves blowing across the grass, taking us with  
them in an accelerating rush to Nettie Cobb who shivers on  
a bench out front of her beloved First Baptist church.  
Little Raider's at her feet, dog and mistress sheltered by  
one of those magnificent red maples. Raider growls, low  
and protectively.

NETTIE

What's wrong...? Where is she?

Nettie looks up, sees a man coming toward her, backlighted  
and rendered just a silhouette as his shoes kick up  
crackling leaves that crunch underfoot like giant Corn  
Flakes. Raider growls again...but as Leland Gaunt draws  
closer, he raises one hand, and the little dog quiets.

GAUNT

May I?

He sits down next to Nettie, under the glorious tree.

GAUNT

Here. For you. From me.

That marvelous Hummel figurine. Things do seem to be there  
whenever Gaunt needs them.

NETTIE

But I can't...I...

GAUNT

You mustn't ever say that awful  
little word to me, Nettie.

NETTIE

What word?

GAUNT

"But." I hate that word. It shouldn't exist. It's a word for weak people. For people who need excuses. I want you to say some words that I love. Words that I absolutely adore.

NETTIE

What words?

GAUNT

Mr. Gaunt knows best. Say that.

INT. KEETON HOUSE - DAY

A woman we've never met, MYRTLE KEETON, Buster's long-suffering wife. She edges down the hall, stops at the closed door to her husband's study. You can hear noises inside, crazy RATTLES. She knocks.

KEETON'S VOICE

Goddamnit, go away! I'll be out when I'm out!

MYRTLE

But aren't you going to work?

RATTLE AND GRIND. GRIND AND RATTLE.. Guess not, Myrtle. Sounds like dirt in a Cuisinart, whatever he's up to.

MYRTLE

Then would you like me to go down to the bakery, Danforth, and maybe get us some nice maple doughnuts?

INT. KEETON'S STUDY - DAY

The man is sweat-drenched and crazed, running races on his new toy like there's no tomorrow...

KEETON

Yes! Yes! Yes! Doughnuts! Toilet paper! A nose job! Go anywhere! Get anything! Just leave me alone!

INT. NETTIE'S HOUSE - DAY

The poor woman comes in with her dog...and her new, most precious little Dutch Boy. So very, very carefully she sets him in a safe niche in the foyer wall then stoops to communicate with Raider, the dog agitated, anxious...

NETTIE

It's okay, it's okay. Mommy has to  
scoot and go do something for Mr.  
Gaunt, but don't worry, she's gonna  
lock the door from now on.

INT. JERZYCK HOUSE - DAY

CRASH! A big picture window implodes in our face...

EXT. JERZYCK FARM - DAY

Pete Jerzyck, a good ways from the house, down here feeding  
his gobblers. Those damn birds making such noise a fella  
can hardly hear himself think.

INT. JERZYCK HOUSE - DAY

Looking out through another window...at Brian Rusk standing  
bold as brass in the yard. He's got a crumpled old grocery  
sack, and he takes a bright green apple from it, winds up  
and lets fly like Sandy Koufax! CRASH AGAIN!

EXT. JERZYCK HOUSE - DAY

Another apple! Another pitch! Another window!

BRIAN

Stee-rike three!

Brian runs to the broken picture window, looks inside and  
sees that first apple he threw lying in the doorway between  
the living room and the kitchen. He shifts his gaze to the  
left...and spots the Jerzycks' TV while...

EXT. JERZYCK FARM - DAY

...Pete Jerzyck feeds his raucous turkeys while...

EXT. NETTIE'S HOUSE - DAY

...Hugh Priest stands on the front porch and knocks. From  
inside there's the rapid click of claws across wood...

HUGH

Raider? Hey, little pal...

INT. NETTIE'S HOUSE - DAY

The lock on Nettie Cobb's door...jiggling and joggling with  
a Swiss Army knife...and Hugh's inside. Mr. Nice Guy.

HUGH

Heya, Raider, how they hangin'?

The small yellow dog rolls over on its back. all paws. splayed out and limp so Hugh can scratch the little critter with one hand...

HUGH

Aw, ain't you a good fella? Ain't you got a face cute as a baby bug?

...while he works the corkscrew blade out of his knife with the other.

HUGH

Yes, you do! Yes, you do! And you know what I got? I got a beautiful jacket. Yes, I do!

The corkscrew rises as Hugh's arm rises...AND A SILVER BELL TINKLES EERILY...

HUGH

And you know what else? I'm gonna keep it!

INT. THE DOT - DAY

THE BELL TINKLING IN HERE TOO, echoing over Polly as she swallows several pills. But the pain keeps stabbing at her hands AS NOW A DOORBELL INTRUDES...

EXT. KEETON HOUSE - DAY

THE KEETONS  
NO SALESMEN!!!

...says a sign over that doorbell as Nettie's finger pushes and pushes and pushes on the button...

INT. KEETON HOUSE - DAY

...the DOORBELL stinging away in the empty living room...

INT. KEETON'S STUDY - DAY

...sounding in here too where the man himself sits frantically, compulsively checking off his Racing Form, conforming it to the amazing predictions from those little tin horses AS HOOFBEATS THUNDER IN HIS BRAIN and drown out that insistent DOORBELL...

EXT. KEETON HOUSE - DAY

Satisfied no one's home, Nettie gets down to business, affixes the first pink citation right there...AN OFFICIAL WARNING signed authoritatively by "Norris Ridgewick." She has a whole pad of 'em and a roll of Scotch tape to boot.

INT. KEETON'S STUDY - DAY

Done. Keeton sits back and contemplates his battle plan. checking his wallet for its meager store of singles and fives...

INT. KEETON HOUSE - DAY

...as Nettie comes in the front door, quiet as a mouse...

...and Keeton steps into the hall from his study, steals into his living room as...

...Nettie comes into the hall and moves toward the kitchen while...

...Keeton takes a book from a high shelf, opens it to raid his secret stash, maybe two hundred bucks in cash as...

...Nettie steps into the kitchen, taping citations to the stove, the wall, the clock, the microwave, the telephone that hangs on the wall by the garage doorway...and then to the refrigerator where all of a sudden she's fascinated by a recipe Myrtle's stuck up with a happy-face magnet: "Aunt Emma's Perfect Apple Pie." So Nettie starts to read the damn thing...

...and Dan Keeton walks right in! But he doesn't see her ...she's three feet away, behind him, thank God, petrified at the refrigerator. Keeton moves toward the garage door. He stops, spots that citation near the telephone.

JUST A WARNING  
but please read and heed  
BUSTER!

And below that? Just above the "citing officer's name"? Norris Ridgewick's name? There's this space called "OTHER VIOLATIONS." What do you suppose is there?

FOR BEING THE BIGGEST  
COCKSUCKER IN CASTLE ROCK

Keeton spins around! The room is a sea of pink citations as...

...Nettie flees across the living room, trips over a hassock, slides on a throw rug...

EMBEZZLEMENT

Keeton rips a citation from the refrigerator! He rips one from the clock!

## FRAUD

EXT. KEETON HOUSE - DAY

Nettie tumbles outside. Careens toward her Datsun...

INT. KEETON HOUSE - DAY

## CORNHOLING YOUR MOTHER

Keeton crushes the slip, tears others from the walls, chairs, appliances...

KEETON

I'll kill him! I'll kill him!

EXT. KEETON DRIVE - DAY

Nettie speeds out, spewing gravel, vanishes...a split second before Myrtle drives in and triggers her garage door.

INT. KEETON HOUSE - DAY

That Keeton hears! She's back with the fucking donuts! Seconds away from coming in and finding all this shit!! So Keeton keeps tearing at the citations, his shirttail out of his pants, his hairy belly bobbling wildly over his belt.

MYRTLE

Danforth....?

She's standing there. Looking at him. He's such a pathetic wreck...

KEETON

I'm sorry...I'm so sorry...don't hate me.

EXT. NETTIE'S HOUSE - DAY

The little Datsun screeches to a halt. Nettie gets out and walks quickly up the cement path to her door, anonymously as possible with head bowed and eyes averted. She puts her key in the lock, but the door doesn't need it, just hinges inward with a crazy creak. Alarming...

INT. NETTIE'S HOUSE - DAY

NETTIE

Where's Mummy's little boy?

Not around here, that's for sure. Nettie heads for her living room. Look what she's missing...the niche is empty, her Dutch boy gone.

NETTIE  
Mummy's home...Raider?

CRUNCH underfoot. Nettie looks down...lifts her foot off the Dutch boy's pulverized head. His body lies nearby, fractured on the rug! Nettie recoils, shocks herself backward onto the couch, speechless...until her left arm settles on An Even Bigger Horror...

...settles on Raider, propped on a cushion like a human being, like he's watching TV with something red jutting from his chest. A high, wailing scream breaks from Nettie...

EXT. JERZYCK FARM - DAY

Pete's still way down by the front gate, doing his chores as Wilma tools back in their van. dusts him and parks near the house.

EXT. JERZYCK HOUSE - DAY

Wilma's out of her van, heavy feet clomping up the porch steps, big fist snapping the front door open, pinched little eyes not even seeing the living room curtains fluttering in a brisk afternoon wind...fluttering outside the house because the big picture window's just gone.

INT. JERZYCK HOUSE - DAY

And in she comes, through the...whack! Wilma's foot hits something, kicks it. A bright green apple, the awful fruit rolling across her floor toward the living room and taking Wilma's eyes with it so that now, finally, she can see...

WILMA  
What the fuck...?

...that the place is a shambles. A bomb site. The TV, her big beautiful TV, is shattered. Her picture window is no more. Lamps sit sideways, knickknacks sprinkled in fragments left and right, and everywhere Wilma looks she sees those bright green apples, squashed ones and perfect ones, apples from McSherry's Orchard.

Wilma reaches into her RadarRange in the kitchen, slits her knuckle on a shard of glass! She lifts out another killer apple, and her big fist closes, crushes the apple and spills its guts and its juice onto the littered floor...mingling with a few drops of Wilma's own blood.

INT. NETTIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

A drawer is opened. Nettie's hand reaches in. Removes a long scary carving knife.

EXT. WILMA'S HOUSE - DAY

Wilma's leaving, passing by her hatchet. still driven right in that tree where she left it. Wilma yanks the thing out, never breaks stride to her van.

INT. SHERIFF'S CAR - DAY

Alan's patrolling down Main Street like a good cop. Up ahead there's a clergyman, Reverend William Rose, occupied now with flagging him down, stepping right out into the middle of the street!

ALAN

God Almighty, Reverend Rose, you looking for a fast route to Heaven?

REVEREND ROSE

I am looking for blood! Catholic blood!

...as Wilma's van tears by, passing Alan like a rocket.

EXT. TOWN COMMON - DAY

Wilma's van speeds in from the left! Nettie's Datsun from the right! The drivers see each other in passing and slam on their brakes. Twenty yards apart. Dust billows and doors pop open...

NETTIE

He never hurt you, so how come?!

...catching the attention of those few CITIZENS strolling by...one or two of them carrying brown paper packages tied up with string...all of them riveted upon...

WILMA

You ruined my RadarRange!

The two women moving closer under those breathtaking old maples, the wind flopping their coats to and fro...

NETTIE

You killed my doggy...

WILMA

I hope he rots in hell!



STAB! Nettie strikes like a cobra, her knife thrusting suddenly, deeply into Wilma's bowels, poking out her back and lifting up her coat like a tent pole...

NETTIE

No...I didn't do it...

There's blood, in spatters, across Nettie's thick glasses.

WILMA

You crazy moron...

And Wilma brings her hatchet down hard, burying it with a deep dull crunch in Nettie's shoulder as the women snap apart, their bloody footprints decorating the sidewalk...a weird Arthur Murray dance diagram...

OLD WOMAN'S VOICE

Hey, what're you two ladies doing there? You stop it right now or I'll call the police!

Wilma strikes again, swings her hatchet in a flat, sweeping arc. It chops into the swell of Nettie's hip and thumps her to the sidewalk, spraying blood across the hot yellow surface of a close-by stop sign!

OLD WOMAN

Help! Police! MURRRDURRRR!

...yells the old woman on her porch...with Nettie in a frightful heap by the base of that stop sign, in the sweet dappled sunlight of the two old maples. Nettie pushes herself to a sitting position, knife held fast in her lap.

NETTIE

Come on, you bitch, come for me if you're coming...

Wilma comes all right, charges, stumbles, and just as the carving knife slices her heart, she sinks her hatchet in Nettie Cobb's head.

OLD WOMAN

MURRRRRDURRRRRR!!!!!!

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

GAUNT

(softly singing)

A little lump of sugar makes the  
medicine go down, makes the medicine  
go down...

He's looking right at us...looking out his front window at two Sheriff's Department cruisers whipping through the intersection of Laurel and Main, lights flashing and twirling.

POLLY

They hurt so much, Mr. Gaunt...

She's in his shop, at the counter. Just standing there working her hands.

GAUNT

Leland.

POLLY

Leland...I can't even think...

Gaunt reaches out, steadying Polly's temples with his long fingers, controlling her totally when he speaks...

GAUNT

You're not well, Polly. So I'm going to dispense with the small talk. I'm going to show you the item I called you about, I'm going to give it to you and send you home.

POLLY

Give it to me...?

GAUNT

Well...more or less.

THE SILVER BELL TINKLES...Dan Keeton comes in. He looks insane. Gaunt keeps his hands boldly upon Polly.

GAUNT

Ah. When it rains, it pours.

KEETON

They're after me.

GAUNT

Go upstairs, Mr. Keeton. To my apartment. Make yourself a nice cup of chicken broth. I'll be with you in a minute.

KEETON

I don't have a minute!

GAUNT

Go upstairs.

## EXT. SCENE OF THE CRIME - DAY

A stop sign spattered with blood...Brian Rusk beneath it, looking up as the two cruisers arrive. join a SMALL CROWD OF BYSTANDERS and the two lawmen already there...Alan and Norris. The arriving officers are John LaPointe and a kid named ANDY CLUTTERBUCK who suddenly, when he sees all that blood, wants to throw up.

ALAN

And call the State Police an' tell 'em we need a Crime Investigation Unit right away, two if they can spare 'em.

Alan's at his car, on the radio, and his eye falls upon Brian Rusk, the kid turning to stare back with an empty expression.

ALAN

You should go home, Brian. This is no place to be now, com'on beat it.

## INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

Gaunt pops up from his basement, setting a small white box down in front of Polly on the counter....

POLLY ..

Just a few minutes before you called, they were feeling better ...but then this swelling...

Alarming to look at, her fingers so twisted...another assault! This one making Polly grit her teeth, turn her head as Gaunt lifts the box lid and removes a lacy gold sphere on a fine chain.

GAUNT

This is very, very, very old. Egyptian. Not as old as the Pyramids, gosh no. But still...

POLLY

I need a glass of water, I need my pills...

From the plastic bottle she's snapped atop the counter ...but Gaunt's got that sphere dangling in Polly's face.

GAUNT

Not any longer, I hope.

He's taken the pills away...

GAUNT

This is called an azka. They say it wards off pain.

POLLY

No...please...my pills. please give them back...

Polly's hands cramp savagely! And Gaunt darts behind her.

POLLY

...no, I'm not superstitious...

GAUNT

It doesn't matter. Because this is.

He puts the chain around her neck, and when the little sphere hits Polly's chest she seems to start as if the tiniest electric shock...

GAUNT

Now when you get home, put it inside your blouse. Wear it right next to your skin.

He's back on his side of the counter, writing Polly's name in his small notebook...

POLLY

I can't...my hands...I can't even unbutton my blouse.

So Gaunt will. Standing right there in his shop...he sets the azka against Polly's naked chest, puts his whole hand atop the little gold ball, so he can feel her heartbeat. Polly's hands loosen, relax.

GAUNT

You shouldn't take it off, Polly, not even in the shower.

EXT. SCENE OF THE CRIME - DAY

Yellow tape cordons off the embracing bodies. "CRIME SCENE DO NOT CROSS." Norris has a Polaroid camera. John LaPointe a pad. Alan ducks under the tape and approaches the stop sign, walking carefully like a guy who's done this grisly stuff before, dictating as he goes...

ALAN

Back spatter. Dotted around the victims in a rough circle. Six, seven feet across.

He means a fine spray of blood droplets. Alan settles down on one knee, just outside that awful circle, stretches his arm to reach the corpses without disturbing any evidence.

ALAN

Photograph me before I move anything.

Norris pops one off, documenting Alan's position outside the circle of evidence and the way the bodies are lying at the foot of the stop sign.

Brain Rusk...in the crowd now, watching Alan lean forward again and cautiously place his finger against the blood-stained neck of the woman lying on the bottom of the heap.

ALAN

No pulse.

Of course not. But the pressure of Alan's fingers causes her head to fall away from the stop sign and turn sideways. He jumps back. It's Nettie.

INT. GAUNT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Keeton's in a corner, in a chair he's drawn over to give himself a clear view of the whole place. The door opens, and he yanks a Colt revolver from his belt!

GAUNT

Don't tell me. They've been in your house. They sent Norris Ridgewick.

KEETON

Yes! Yes! How did you know?

Gaunt shuts the door, peeks out a front window...to watch Polly head down Main Street.

GAUNT

And now They've got the State Police here too. It won't work.

Such certainty. Gaunt so impresses Dan Keeton that...

KEETON

I need your advice. I think I should kill Norris Ridgewick.

Gaunt opens his refrigerator. The thing is stocked with all manner of normal-looking food. And beer, lots of it. He takes out two cans of Bud.

GAUNT

No. That'd make things far too easy for them. They'd come get you. Hunt you down like an animal. Top Killer!

Keeton flinches! And Gaunt snatches away his visitor's big Colt revolver.

GAUNT

They'd have a party. They'd get all liquored up in Sheriff Pangborn's office. They'd go out to Homeland Cemetery and urinate on your grave.

Click. The weapon cocks.

GAUNT

They're all a part of it, Dan, you know that. All your weaselly fellow Selectmen. But Sheriff Pangborn's the big shot ringleader. He came in from outside. Dan, to take over your town, and, on boy, would he just love it if you blew away one of his little drones...

Gaunt's taking aim at the window...any second...

KEETON

So what should I do?

GAUNT

Nothing.

Gaunt lowers the revolver, sets its hammer back harmlessly.

KEETON

Nothing?

GAUNT

Drink your beer. Drink it!

That's a command. Keeton takes up his can, his eyes fixed over its rim at Leland Gaunt as he slurps...

GAUNT

I'll keep this gun for awhile, Dan. Save you from yourself. You just go to the races tonight. Win yourself a bundle! Sow confusion and uncertainty among the enemy!

KEETON

Confusion and uncertainty.

Keeton's dribbling his beer when he says the words. Says them slowly, tasting them.

GAUNT

In the meantime...I'm laying my own plans. And when the Great Moment comes....? For all that you'll do...

Clink. Gaunt's can against Keeton's. A wink.

GAUNT

...this Bud's for you.

EXT. SCENE OF THE CRIME - DAY

The STATE POLICE are here now too, and EVERETT PAYTON, a thorough, conscientious plodder twenty years Alan's senior, has one of Wilma's bloody shoes on a pencil. He drops it into a Ziploc Saggie.

EVERETT

Nice church. Pretty trees. Baptist?

NORRIS

No, maples. That's Reverend Rose.

On the front porch, discussing things with a few serious members of his flock.

NORRIS

Probably stirrin' up more shit.

EVERETT

Why?

NORRIS

'Cause that one's a Catholic.

Wilma. Everett leaves Norris, walks over to Alan who's helping a police artist work out a sketch of the crime-scene grid...as Brian Rusk finally gets up enough nerve to...

BRIAN

Sheriff Pangborn...

EVERETT

(intercepting)

Not now, son, the Sheriff's got his both hands full.

ALAN

Did you see it happen, Brian?

BRIAN

No...

ALAN

Then Lieutenant Payton's right.  
okay? I already asked you to go  
once, didn't I now?

The little boy stares hard at Alan then turns and runs.  
Bolts off. It's a sudden, crazy reaction that leaves Alan  
at a loss, more so when the kid blasts between two adult  
bystanders, knocking one of them off balance...

...before running headlong into Leland Gaunt!

GAUNT

Easy, whoa, easy, Brian.

Alan watches Gaunt steady the boy, squat to calm him.

EVERETT

Why'd they do it, if you had to  
guess?

Meaning Wilma and Nettie of course, drawing Alan back to  
the murder.

ALAN

You're asking the wrong guy. I  
don't understand people anymore.

EVERETT

Fine. Then I'll handle it.

INT. THE DOT - DAY

There aren't many lingering lunch customers in the place  
right now so Myra Evans is cleaning up, trembling and  
holding back tears none too successfully...

MYRA

Oh, Alan...how awful...

He's come in, and she's against him, weak in the knees.

ALAN

Where's Polly? Has she heard?

MYRA

I don't know. She went out, hands  
were killing her, she didn't come  
back. I called her house, but the  
machine was on...oh, God, poor  
Nettie...



ALAN  
It's okay, it's okay...

MYRA  
No, it's not.

EXT. POLLY'S HOUSE - DAY

The Sheriff's car drives up. Alan gets out, heads for the front door, passing...

ALAN  
Hello, Mrs. Brennan.

MRS. BRENNAN keeps walking, arms wrapped tightly around her brown paper sack of...groceries? Perhaps. Perhaps not.

INT. POLLY'S HOUSE - DAY

Alan's silhouette fills the curtained front-door window. He turns the knob...unlocked.

ALAN  
Polly?

No response. Alan works his way back to the bedroom. He opens the door and sees Polly sleeping in the dim, shaded light. He comes forward, sits on the bed. She stirs. And Alan sees the necklace, the azka. He lifts it up in his fingers...but she grabs it back!

ALAN  
It's me.

POLLY  
What happened...?

She falls back against the pillow, breathing hard.

POLLY  
I was dreaming...that something awful happened...

Polly looks at her hands. They seem so much better.

ALAN  
It did.

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - DAY

There's a good deal of agitation and concern among the scattering of locals already gathered out here when those cruisers carrying Norris and John LaPointe and Andy Clutterbuck return...nobody noticing...

...Cora Rusk as she slips from the building's front door and effects a nasty disappearance down the sidewalk.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - DAY

The three officers come in as Sheila emerges from Alan's office with her hands full of paperwork, two lines RINGING AWAY on her desk...

JOHN

Worse thing I ever seen in sixteen years, Sheila, the worse.

SHEILA

I don't wanna hear.

(into phone)

Hello, Sheriff's Department. No, he's not here now, Reverend Rose.

ANDY

I finally hadda throw up in the sewer.

NORRIS

Hey, what's this here on my desk?  
This for me, Sheila?

A package with bright foil paper and a blue velvet bow. We saw it before...on Cora Rusk's bureau.

SHEILA

What's what?

(her other line)

I don't know enough about it, Frank, sorry. Alan's not back yet.

JOHN

Looks like a present. Maybe Dan Keeton's tryna kiss an' make up, Norris. Give 'im a call.

NORRIS

It's got my name on it here.

So Norris starts unwrapping the box as Sheila hangs up.

ANDY

There was brains everywhere, Sheila. State cops picked everything up, pieces of bone an' stuff, an' put 'em in plastic baggies like for lunch.

NORRIS

AAWWWWW!!!

Norris yanks his hand out of the package! There's a large Victory rat-trap clamped on the first three fingers! Pain rips up his arm! He screams, stumbles, beating the trap against the side of John LaPointe's desk, hurting himself some more until Sheila's on him, freeing the steel jaws. He bolts for the men's room, turns on the cold water tap.

ANDY

There's a note come with it too.

(reading the scrawl)

"Crip space is all yours now."

Norris sticks his head back in, a wet bloody towel around his poor fingers as he snarls:

NORRIS

Buster! That son of a bitch! You hit the nail on the head, pal.

JOHN

Buster Keeton...?

INT. CATHOLIC RECTORY - DUSK

Father Brigham sits in low, moody light at his mahogany desk, in his panelled study, reading a letter out loud...

FATHER BRIGHAM

"How you doing, you Stupid Babtist Rat-Fuck?"

The mood is solemn, the words terrifying in this dignified space. SEVERAL YOUNGER PRIESTS are Father Brigham's audience, and an uncomfortable Alan Pangborn sits with them, made more so by this oral presentation...

FATHER BRIGHAM

"We are writting you to say Quit talking aginst our Casino Nite. A Bunch of us Loyal Catholics are tired of your Bullshit. We all know you Babtists are..."

ALAN

We have to read this out loud? I didn't bring it over here so we...

FATHER BRIGHAM

"...a bunch of Cunt Lickers anyway."

Strong stuff. The young priests are trapped in this ugliness with Alan.

FATHER BRIGHAM

"Now to THIS you better Pay  
Attention. Reverend Steam-Boat  
Willie. If you don't keep your  
Dick-Face out of Our business  
tomorrow nite. YOU WILL BE A SORRY  
SON OF A BITCH. Just a warning  
from..."

(big pause)

"...THE CONCERNED CATHOLIC MEN OF  
CASTLE ROCK."

Silence.

FATHER MITCHELL

A Catholic did not write that  
letter, Father. Maybe a Baptist  
did.

ALAN

I don't think so. Any more than I  
think a Baptist wrote that letter  
Father Brigham got yesterday.

FATHER BRIGHAM

A third party? A Lutheran? The  
Devil?

He's half joking, deadly earnest.

ALAN

I don't know, Father. I don't know  
what the hell is going on in this  
town.

There's a moment. These are deeply upset men.

FATHER BRIGHAM

How's Polly? How's she taking  
Nettie's...

ALAN

Not well.

INT. POLLY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

She's making dinner. Alan's sitting at the kitchen table  
watching her, nursing a beer. The silence hurts. He can't  
let it just lie there.

ALAN

So what're you telling me, it's  
magic? The guy's a witch doctor?

POLLY

No. I don't know. This is all I care about.

Her hands. The splints are off, and to make her point as forcefully as possible Polly opens and closes her fists in front of Alan's skeptical face, right in his face.

ALAN

I don't wanna fight...I just don't see it makes sense, it's only a goddamn necklace.

POLLY

That works.

ALAN

You've had remissions before, that's all I'm...

POLLY

What is your point?! Don't you want me to feel better?

ALAN

Take it easy...that's crazy...

POLLY

You take it easy. They're my hands! You're not the one who can't sleep at night! You're not the one with the goddamn oversized buttons on her telephone, or the one with...

ALAN

...the oversized Percodan prescription.

Oh, brother, not smart, Alan.

POLLY

What're you saying? What the hell're you saying?

ALAN

Nothing, I'm sorry, forget it.

POLLY

Too late. You think I'm taking pills, you think I'm abusing...

ALAN

No...

POLLY  
You think that's why the swelling's  
gone, why I can make you dinner  
again?

ALAN  
No!

Silence.

POLLY  
Why this goddamn ring fits again?

Their engagement ring. Back on Polly's finger. But for  
how long?

INT. ALAN'S SQUAD CAR - DAY

Alan pulls up in front of a modest, run-down little 60's  
ranch house, studies it for a moment like maybe this isn't  
even a good idea...

RADIO VOICE  
Sheriff Pangborn, over. This is  
your State Police calling.

ALAN  
Hello, Everett, what do you got?

RADIO VOICE  
Bad news about your double murder.

ALAN  
Oh, now it's my double murder again?

RADIO VOICE  
We don't know who killed the Cobb  
woman's dog, but we're almost  
positive it wasn't Wilma Jerzyck.

Alan looks over at the little ranch house.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Alan rings the doorbell. It's busted. He knocks. Waits.  
A MAN walks by on the sidewalk carrying a grocery sack,  
acknowledging Alan with a peculiar tilt of the head.

INT. CORA RUSK'S BEDROOM - DAY

The shades are drawn, and it's murky in here, and Cora's  
peeking out at Sheriff Pangborn on her front porch while  
Elvis sings "Love Me Tender" low on the tape machine.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE BACKYARD - DAY

ALAN  
Mrs. Rusk? Brian?

The house seems empty. Wind ripples the crimson foliage.  
Was that a noise from the garage?

INT. RUSK GARAGE - DAY

Brian stands by a cluttered workbench, spinning the chamber of Dan Keeton's Colt revolver...last seen in Leland Gaunt's possession.

ALAN  
Hi.

The kid whirls around, hiding the gun as he does.

ALAN  
Your mom home?

BRIAN  
I don't know.

ALAN  
You wanted to tell me something back there yesterday...out by the church.  
And then Mr. Gaunt...

BRIAN  
About the apples.

ALAN  
At Wilma's? What about 'em?

BRIAN  
Nothing anymore.

Alan comes closer. Brian's nervous.

ALAN  
What's bothering you, son? Don't be afraid to say.

BRIAN  
I'm not afraid.

Alan squats next to the kid...who edges sideways so the Sheriff has to adjust, so there's no chance Alan will see that big Colt tucked away on the workbench.

ALAN  
Between you and me? Bullshit.

BRIAN

A monster.

ALAN

A what?

BRIAN

I dreamed about him last night.

Brian means it. And that stymies Alan.

ALAN

Well, sometimes I can make the scary stuff go away.

BRIAN

Not monsters.

Alan takes a deep breath. This job. More and more lately it makes him feel so helpless.

ALAN

Nope. Not monsters.

EXT. RUSK GARAGE - DAY

Alan steps outside. Feeling uneasy. He starts to leave, sees something on the grass. A baseball card. A 1956 Sandy Koufax. He picks it up, looks back at the garage...

INT. RUSK GARAGE - DAY

Brian. The Colt 45 to his temple...the hammer cocking as Alan re-enters. Brian can see him. The pistol stays put.

BRIAN

Don't come any closer...you'll get the mess on you.

ALAN

Brian...please...no...kid...

Alan can't move. Damned if he does, damned if he doesn't.

ALAN

Okay. At least...will you tell me something...just one thing? Just tell me what you're really scared of? Maybe I can make it go away.

BRIAN

It's too late. I gotta go to hell.

ALAN

What do you mean, Brian?



Alan takes a small step forward, but it's enough to make Brian itch his finger on that trigger.

BRIAN

Don't go in that store. Never go there.

ALAN

Needful Things?

He knew. That helps, just a bit, not enough...

BRIAN

It's a poison place, and he's a poison man.

ALAN

Mr. Gaunt?

BRIAN

Only he's not a man.

"Not a man." Alan raises his hand. It's got the baseball card in it. Maybe...

ALAN

This is yours, isn't it? Sandy Koufax. 1956? Here...

An excuse to come just that much closer...

ALAN

You don't wanna lose a thing like this, do you?

Tears are streaming down the boy's face. He isn't taking the bait, isn't buying any of this...

BRIAN

Sandy Koufax sucks.

Alan knows it, sees the finger tightening on that trigger ...leaps! A BLAST! Flat and loud in the dark garage... Alan on the little boy, blood on Alan. Blood on Sandy Koufax. Alan's looking at the card. All of a sudden there's nothing so great about it. It's tattered, dog-eared. It's not even a rare '56 anymore. Not all it was cracked up to be.

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

GAUNT

Yessirree...we're having fun now.

Leland Gaunt stands in his shop, smiling upon Main Street.  
He reaches into his front window, sets a new sign in place.

CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

INT. SMALL HOUSE - DAY

We've not been here before. Someone's sneaking around.  
This half-seen intruder pulling letter-size business  
envelopes from his coat...the kind with those little peek-  
through cellophane windows. And now we see his face...  
Reverend Willie Rose sweating nervously as he arrays the  
envelopes on a desktop, tries to make everything look so  
natural, like they belong...near a photo of Alan and Polly.

INT. NORTHERN CUMBERLAND HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Alan Pangborn and Norris Ridgewick are here because Brian  
Rusk is here. And here comes Everett Payton, the State  
cop, shambling into the Emergency Room too.

ALAN

He's stable. He'll make it, no  
thanks to me.

NORRIS

Not true. He saved the kid's life.

Alan starts walking, going somewhere so the other two  
follow...Norris with an ugly bandage on his injured hand.

EVERETT

Where'd he get the gun?

NORRIS

We don't know. It's registered to  
our Head Selectman, crazy guy named  
Dan Keeton. He sent me a rat trap  
in a box.

Everett's trying to follow all this...

EVERETT

You talk to the man?

ALAN

Can't find him. I need some  
information, Everett, fast. Either  
I do it or you guys do it. I wanna  
call the Attorney General's Office  
in Augusta, have them check out a  
person named Leland Gaunt.

EVERETT

Who is he?

ALAN  
Hey, if I only knew.

NORRIS  
He's from Akron, Ohio.

ALAN  
That's what he tells people.

EVERETT  
What're you saying? He's involved  
with the gun? What's he do for a  
living?

There's a pause. The first one since these three guys  
started walking and talking.

ALAN  
He runs an antique shop.

There's another pause.

EVERETT  
You call.

Fine with Alan. He's already in the phone booth. That's  
where he took them.

EVERETT  
Anyway, Wilma Jerzyck...

ALAN  
...didn't leave her fingerprints on  
that pocket knife in the dog's  
chest.

NORRIS  
How do you know? Is that true?

EVERETT  
Or any where else in the house.

ALAN  
And if Nettie Cobb threw that shit,  
then why'd she bother to throw the  
apples too?

(to the operator)  
I'd like to use my Calling Card,  
that's what I was trying to do...

NORRIS  
So then who did throw 'em?

INT. POLLY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It's RAINING outside, and there's a KNOCKING on Polly's door, insistent as she opens up...

ALAN

Can I come in?

POLLY

(of course)

Ever hear of an umbrella?

ALAN

Brian Rusk shot himself. He tried to commit suicide. I was there. You got an aspirin? My head's ripped apart.

He walks right past her, into the bathroom, and by the time Polly catches up, he's already opened the medicine chest.

ALAN

Eleven years old, he ate a bullet.

POLLY

Why?

The aspirin going down with a cupped handful of water from the sink...

ALAN

Some monster made him do it. He had a bad dream. I don't know. I can't keep up with all the shit happening in this town! What's this?

From her medicine chest, trying to stuff the aspirins back, Alan's found a pill bottle.

POLLY

What?

ALAN

This. Percodan. Empty.

POLLY

No. It can't be.

She takes it, looks at it.

ALAN

Yes.

He walks away...

INT. POLLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

She comes out of the bathroom, finds him sitting on the bed, wiped out, taking his wet jacket off.

ALAN

Just don't lie to me. I know they hurt.

POLLY

I didn't lie to you. And they don't hurt, not anymore, but I didn't take all these pills. I don't even remember putting the goddamn bottle back in the cabinet.

ALAN

Fine, fine. Whatever.

She comes around behind him in silence, puts her hands on his shoulders, bends low to kiss his cheek...

POLLY

What's happening to us?

...and the azka swings out of her blouse, bobs in front of Alan's face. He grabs it. Holds it and thus holds her in an awkward...

POLLY

Hey...

ALAN

Leland Gaunt gave you this.

POLLY

He didn't give it to me. Stop...

ALAN

And it made the pain go away. Take it off, Polly. It's a disease that looks like a cure.

POLLY

Are you crazy?

She tugs, and he releases. It's like he's some stranger.

ALAN

Take it off and lemme see what the hell's inside that goddamn thing!

This is awful...THE PHONE RINGS! Polly grabs it.

POLLY

Hello. Yes. Yes, he is. He's  
right here. Whoever he is.

Cold. She hands Alan the phone. It's the closest they've  
been in a scary half minute.

ALAN

Yeah. Okay. Okay. That's what I  
thought. Thank you.

He hangs up and looks at her.

ALAN

There's no Leland Gaunt ever ran any  
business in Akron, Ohio.

POLLY

You checked on him? Why? Alan,  
he's a good man.

Alan's heading out...putting his jacket back on.

POLLY

Alan, it's nine thirty. Where're  
you going? It's pouring rain...

ALAN

Great. Then he'll be home.

Gone. Polly stands alone. He made her tremble.

EXT. NEEDFUL THINGS - NIGHT

Rain water running down the window between us and

CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

as Alan's car pulls up out front.

INT. ALAN'S SQUAD CAR - NIGHT

Lightning stutters on and off, gives the store's front  
window the look of a blank, dead eye...absolutely no  
illumination in the building...

INT. POLLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Why is it so hot in here? That rain splattering Polly's  
windows must be cool, but she's sweating, throwing back the  
covers, lying on the bed in her underwear. LIGHTNING.  
Enough to sparkle that little gold azka around her neck.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Alan's car eases into view in the rain-soaked alley, reaches the rear entrance of Leland Gaunt's dark domain.

Alan gets out. He moves carefully to Needful Things. A "Deliveries" entrance. He sets his hand on the knob... CRASH! Behind him. TWO BOYS run off in the rain. Alan draws his service revolver. The door's unlocked.

INT. POLLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

She turns on a small lamp...takes the azka into her palm. There's a sizzle, a creepy buzz from inside the thing. And then these awful ARACHNOIDAL LEGS probe out, tickling her flesh! Polly struggles to take the necklace off, but its clasp stays firm, and the insect is hissing against her chest so she grabs a nail file from her bureau and jabs it into the azka, and the azka springs open, hinged like two halves of a golden filigreed pecan...and the thing inside jumps out!...hits the floor with a soggy thud, spider-like, horrific! THUNDER! A current of fierce pain charges through Polly's hands...

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - NIGHT

THE THUNDER FADES with a deep growl. Alan's in the shop proper. ANOTHER FLASH OF LIGHTNING! The place looks almost derelict. The carpet littered with odds and ends, Gaunt's cardboard boxes overflowing with scrumpled newspaper...

INT. POLLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

She's pulling on her hand splints...backing away as the INSECT jerks toward her across the bedroom floor, cornering her against the wall. MORE PAIN, so severe Polly's hands spasm, the azka dangles open from her neck. The thing crawls closer, tickling up onto Polly's bare foot...

INT. GAUNT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alan hits a switch! Just light. Nothing more. The place looks uninhabited. The refrigerator open and empty. There's a screwy bumper sticker plastered on its door front: SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHERIFF.

INT. POLLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A naked thigh glistening with sweat as the insect crosses her panties and climbs onto her stomach. Polly's paralyzed, terrified and dependent, the pain won't go away unless...

GAUNT

He can help.

Polly turns fast! There sits Gaunt! In a bedside chair, watching her. She looks down at the hideous climbing thing only inches from the azka...

GAUNT

Open up. Let him in. Or else...

More pain! Polly opens the azka, and the insect burrows back inside.

GAUNT

That's my girl.

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - NIGHT

Alan moves frantically through the apartment. Empty cabinets. Empty closet. Nothing in the medicine chest. A bed frame with an old dirty mattress...Gaunt's flashlight.

INT. POLLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gaunt wipes her brow, lifts the golden azka from her chest and holds it in his fingertips like a precious jewel...

GAUNT

Fifty dollars. Does that seem a fair price to ease the pain?

POLLY

In my purse, on the bureau...

Gaunt's taken her hand, begun gently to undo the splint...

GAUNT

Fifty dollars and a small favor.

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS BASEMENT - NIGHT

Alan descends, a beam from that flashlight leading the way. There's practically nothing down here. But from down here Gaunt brought up all those wonderful things.

INT. POLLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

POLLY

What sort of favor...?

He's sitting right on her bed now, watching Polly struggle to make her improving hands unsnap the wallet she's gotten from her purse...



GAUNT

You won't squeal to your boyfriend about this transaction now, will you? I think he's a jealous sort.

POLLY

He's coming to see you, he went to see you, he thinks you're a confidence man.

Gaunt grabs her wallet! Impatient, he pops it open, greedily counting out his fifty bucks...

GAUNT

Alan Pangborn has lots of thoughts and lots of plans. But...

He leans close, and Polly has nowhere to go because the headboard...

GAUNT

...his plans will change and his thoughts are going to blow away like fog on a misty morning.

Gaunt's breath on Polly's face...

POLLY

You're not going to hurt him, are you?

GAUNT

He'll hurt himself.

Gaunt's eyes into Polly's eyes...

POLLY

What sort of favor...please...

Like a scorpion...closer...

GAUNT

Just a kiss.

POLLY

NO!

Her hands shoot up and ram into Gaunt's shoulders, knocking him backward...making him laugh.

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - NIGHT

Alan's in the shop again, frustrated, at a loss. He steps toward those forgotten cardboard boxes, squats and probes amid the newspapers. A sad kewpie doll. An old thermos

bottle. A busted-up Bakelite radio. But now his eye falls on something that's been there all along, right under his nose. The crumpled newspaper itself. An old paper, a Chicago Tribune. Dated December 31, 1903.

FIRE AT IROQUOIS THEATER  
602 PERISH

1903? Alan goes back to the boxes...The Mississippi Herald, June 10, 1878.

YELLOW FEVER EPIDEMIC CLAIMS 6000

Another paper. A Cuban paper from March 5, 1960. Burning warehouses, a flaming munitions ship.

100 MUERTE!

Another. Another. Another. Major fires. Disasters all over the world. Stretching back God knows how far? So many local newspapers stuffed in these boxes.

INT. POLLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gaunt's at the mirror, straightening himself up, suddenly so vain...Polly watching him from her bed...

GAUNT

No matter what you think of me, you really must reconsider your relationship with that Sheriff.

POLLY

I don't have to. I love him.

GAUNT

He's a liar.

POLLY

No, he's not.

GAUNT

And a thief.

POLLY

Get out of here!

Gaunt makes it to the door as THUNDER RUMBLES. He goes out...pokes his head back in. Such a wicked tease...

GAUNT

Alan an' ol' Buster Keeton been  
embezzlin' from the town treasury,  
dear lady. An' the tax man is  
closin' in.

There's a pause here. Because too many fragments are  
suddenly on the table, pieces of a dark puzzle that  
Polly...

GAUNT

Have I struck a nerve? That's my  
job. Gotta run.

Head out. Head in.

GAUNT

All he's going to do is cause you  
pain.

Gone. For real. In a FLASH OF LIGHTNING!

EXT. THE MELLOW TIGER - NIGHT

WHHHSSSSHHHH! Air rushing out of an automobile tire. A  
knife stabbing another tire. ANOTHER WWWHHISSSSHHHH!

Pete Jerzyck stands up in the rain. He's just savaged all  
four tires on a Buick parked in the tavern lot.

INT. THE MELLOW TIGER - NIGHT

Hugh Priest. Yes, he's wearing his old letterman's jacket.  
Yes, he's drunk...getting off another good kick at Henry  
Beaufort's beautiful Rock-Ola.

HENRY

You son of a bitch!!

Henry's on Hugh, Hugh's on the machine, trying to tip it  
over! PATRONS intervene, save the jukebox, yank Henry and  
Hugh apart. From his stool:

KEETON

Miserable little shit. I'm firin'  
his ass first thing Monday mornin'.

Keeton's got a WAD OF CASH to drink. He looks up at that  
Big Spy Mirror over the bar.

KEETON

Everybody that's got it comin' is  
gonna get it now.

CORA RUSK  
Includin' you, Buster.

Cora a fellow sufferer on the adjoining stool.

KEETON  
Meaning? If my little boy was lyin'  
in the hospital I wouldn't go  
pushin' my luck in a bar. Cora.

CORA RUSK  
Meanin' Norris Ridgewick is huntin'  
your fat ass, Danforth.

Keeton tries to clear his head, distracted for a second by  
Henry Beaufort hauling Hugh out past them by the collar...

CORA RUSK  
(salt in the wound)  
They're all talkin about it too.  
Norris tol' John LaPointe an' John  
tol' his wife an' she tol' everybody  
else. They all know you're hidin'.

EXT. THE MELLOW TIGER - NIGHT

Hugh. Tossed out into the rain. Stumbling toward his car,  
seeing his FLAT TIRES in a flash of lightning.

INT. POLLY'S CAR - NIGHT

She pulls up outside Alan's small house. Warm lights glow  
inside. Polly looks feverish, stressed.

INT. SMALL HOUSE - NIGHT

POLLY  
Alan?

He doesn't seem to be home. Polly checks the kitchen, his  
bedroom, his small office. She goes to his desk, grabs his  
telephone, pokes three digits.

POLLY  
I need the number for a shop called  
Needful Things. It's a new listing.

Polly waits. Her nervous hands playing with the objects on  
Alan's desk...her eye going to one of those several  
envelopes Reverend Rose put there. And through the little  
cellophane window Polly can see legal tender.

POLLY

No, you have to have it. It's a business. It's only about a week old.

The envelope's not sealed. It's crammed with hundred dollar bills. And so are the others.

POLLY

No...okay...nevermind.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Norris Ridgewick. Asleep at the wheel. The door bursts open behind him, and Norris leaps to his feet, quick-drawing and aiming his revolver with two crazy hands at... Alan Pangborn. Wet and wild.

NORRIS

Holy sweet Jesus. I almost wasted you, Alan!

But Alan's already sitting down, spreading out those old newspapers, dialing his telephone. Norris comes over to see what's the big deal. First a Russian newspaper he can't read. Then The Los Angeles Times, October 15, 1924.

PLAGUE QUICKLY STAMPED OUT

Then The Kent Gazette, Kent, England, April 5, 1916.

POWDER FACTORY EXPLOSION  
170 LOSE THEIR LIVES

ALAN

He was there. Every goddamn time, he was there. And that baseball card he sold Brian, it changed in my hand, Norris...the stuff's not real.

NORRIS

Who was where?

Alan can't get through. He hangs up.

ALAN

Gaunt. Leland Gaunt. Every time.

NORRIS

Get outta here. 1894?

THE PHONE RINGS!

ALAN

Yeah, Sheriff's Department. Where are you? I just hung up calling your place...

INT. SMALL HOUSE - NIGHT

POLLY

I'm at your house, Alan.

There's a deadness in her voice.

POLLY

How could you? How could you?

INTERCUT...

ALAN

How could I what...?

(to Norris)

We gotta find him. Call John and Andy.

POLLY

You and Danforth Keeton taking all that money from the town. I know. I found it, Alan.

ALAN

Hold it, what money...? You know what?

POLLY

Pretending you weren't covering up for Keeton with that man on the phone, going over to his dealership at night...

ALAN

What the hell is this, Polly? Who told you...

He knows. He knows goddamn well who told her.

POLLY

Leland Gaunt.

ALAN

Polly, listen to me. I want to his place. The man is a monster, Polly, don't go near him. He's Brian's monster...somehow. He's not a human being, Polly.

Well. Norris sits down, Alan staring at him.

POLLY

You're crazy, Alan. You're sick.  
and you're crazy. And Leland says  
all you're gonna do is cause me  
pain.

ALAN

"Leland"? "Leland"?! I'm not  
causing you any goddamn pain!

POLLY

Yes, you are.

Some things you just can't discuss on the phone.

ALAN

Stay there. Okay? Just stay there.  
I'm coming home.

Alan hangs up.

NORRIS

What do you mean he's a monster?  
What kind of monster? I met the  
guy. I liked him...

KRRAGGGGKKKK!! What the hell was that?! Right outside,  
metal on metal and now the SQUEAL of a car winding into  
reverse...

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Buster Keeton's large red Cadillac comes forward again  
through the rain and CRUNCHES into a tragic little VW  
Beetle parked and unoccupied curbside...

NORRIS

MY CAAARRRRRR!!

He's outside, a yard behind Alan, a second too late. The  
next impact topples Norris' VW onto its side with a HOLLOW  
BANG!!

Alan's at the Cadillac, ripping its door open, ripping  
Keeton out from behind the wheel, but Keeton's a madman,  
drunk and homicidal! He slams Alan out of the way and goes  
for Norris on the slippery surface...

KEETON

Here I am! You found me!

Alan. Recovered. Hauling Keeton off Norris and throwing  
him onto the Caddy hood!

KEETON

It's YOU!! The little prick works  
for YOU!!

He charges Alan, a crazy assault that Alan repels with a single, elegant, street-fighter's chop to the Head Selectman's jaw. One of those blows so focused and precise you gotta cheer.

ALAN

You alive? Norris...

NORRIS

Who...?

Back to Keeton. Handcuffs. Alan drags the bastard over to the Caddy and chains him to its door.

ALAN

Norris! Can you handle this or not?  
Get your breath, get your shit  
together, then lock this son of a  
bitch up. I gotta find Polly...

And he jumps into his squad car, speeds away. Norris Ridgewick and Danforth "Buster" Keeton III. The night is young. There Keeton stands, in the middle of the street, handcuffed to his own Cadillac, helpless. Boy, does Norris ever know who's in charge of this situation now. He straightens out his holster and comes forward...drawing his weapon, cocking it...hard to do with that damaged hand.

KEETON

I'm not a piece of shit...

Norris comes real close...lifts the .38 dead level with Keeton's crotch.

NORRIS

This is for my surprise package, you  
fat turd...

Click! Empty chamber. Norris knew it.

NORRIS

Gotcha.

Wrong. Keeton kicks out! Only a lunatic could do it, all feet and frenzy, catching Norris in the nuts, crippling him as Keeton lands on his own butt in the process, one arm still yanked up there and cuffed to the door handle.

KEETON

Didn't expect that, did you?



EXT. SMALL HOUSE - NIGHT

Alan bursts in, only half-expecting to find Polly still here...determining so quickly that she isn't. But what he does find stops him cold. Those strange envelopes. Empty. And all over his desk? Not money. Just blank white paper the size of currency, strewn everywhere.

Oh, and one other thing. Their engagement ring. Polly's left it there, atop all his ill-gotten "cash."

EXT. NEEDFUL THINGS - NIGHT

HUGH

You can't be closed. I need help.

Hugh's standing outside the big window, orphaned in the storm, staring at that devastating sign..."Closed Until..." TINKLE, TINKLE. His head snaps to the front door.

GAUNT

My friend, you look a fright.

Gaunt's fingers on Hugh's soggy old jacket...

INT. KEETON BEDROOM - NIGHT

A rosy-cheeked, smiling little doll in a snow-white gown rests with its head upon the pillow...next to Myrtle Keeton. Myrtle's deep in a troubled sleep, but the doll looks as happy as the day we first saw it in Gaunt's front window.

WHONK! WHONK! WHONNNKK!

Bolt upright, eyes bulging in terror...

MYRTLE

I did it! I did what you told me!

Where is she? What's that racket? A CAR HORN out by the garage. Myrtle snaps on a light. Other dolls, lesser dolls, sit around the room to keep her company. But only that special one, that gorgeous one from Mr. Gaunt can sleep with Myrtle and comfort her now because...

WHONNNNNNNNNKK!

Dan's home.

EXT. KEETON HOUSE - NIGHT

He sits in his driveway, cuffed to his Caddy, palm held hard on the horn, tears streaming down his face. At last

the door between the garage and the kitchen opens, and Myrtle pokes her head out, eyes large and frightened.

KEETON

I thought you'd died on the john.

MYRTLE

Danforth, what's wrong...? Are you crying...?

KEETON

Nothing's wrong. Things're better than they been in years. I just need a little help here, that's all.

He spikes his car into the garage, and Myrtle hurries in behind him. The door closes...Dan on the remote...

INT. KEETON GARAGE - NIGHT

MYRTLE

Danforth, you're handcuffed to the front door...

KEETON

Pangborn. Pass me that hacksaw. On the wall.

MYRTLE

What did you do...?

KEETON

No, second thought, gimme the big screwdriver an' that hammer. Now, you moron!

Myrtle turns in the small space, panicky...and quick as a snake Keeton shoots his free hand through the open window, grabs her by the hair!

KEETON

Where you goin'!?

MYRTLE

I can't reach...

She's trying, desperately, her arm wagging at the wall of tools...landing on...

KEETON

That's a drill! Did I ask for a drill!? Why won't you help me...?

MYRTLE

But, Danforth, I can't see...

KEETON

I suppose you want me to let you go.  
Then you could run into the house  
and call Them, couldn't you?

Her groping fingers hit the big screwdriver...

KEETON

That's one. Whaddaya say let's try  
for two?

Myrtle's fluttering fingers find that perforated rubber  
grip on the Craftsman hammer...she gets it to Keeton, and  
he lets go of her hair and starts whacking away, holding  
the screwdriver with his cuffed hand, smashing it with his  
hammer until the door handle cracks right off.

MYRTLE

Danforth, did you break the law?  
Those are handcuffs...

Keeton looks at her, gets out of his car slowly,  
menacingly, the cuffs dangling from his wrist...

KEETON

Did I break Their law?

He's advancing on Myrtle, thuck, thuck, thucking the  
hammerhead into his palm with a soft, fleshy sound...

KEETON

How about this, Myrtle? Did you  
break the law? Did you sleep with  
him? I bet you did, to humiliate  
me...

MYRTLE

Who...? Did I what...?

KEETON

Norris Ridgewick! Did you sleep  
with him after the two of you put  
those goddamn parking tickets up all  
over my house?

MYRTLE

No...it's our house, Buster...

Myrtle's hand flies to her mouth. Too late.

INT. POLLY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

MISTAKE  
MISTAKE  
MISTAKE

Scrawled in soap. On Polly's medicine chest mirror. By Alan. He's standing there looking at what he's done. He turns fast and goes out into the empty bedroom. There's another mirror, over the bureau.

HE'S EVIL

Alan writes the words quickly, like graffiti.

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - NIGHT

HUGH

He cut my tires. Then he threw me out in the rain in my beautiful jacket.

GAUNT

Perhaps then you oughta just go take care of Henry once and for all, Hugh, no?

HUGH

How?

Gaunt reaches below his countertop, produces an automatic pistol. He pushes it toward Hugh Priest.

GAUNT

Fully loaded. And free.

HUGH

Free? Why?

GAUNT

Just because. Because I've been in this business a long, long time, and I've learned the pleasure of giving something back to my customers. Because when I started out I was just a poor, wandering peddler on the blind face of a distant land.

HUGH

You were...?

GAUNT

Always moving, always gone...leaving the bloodshed, the horror, and all that unhappiness behind me. Year

(more)

## GAUNT (CONTD)

after year after year. In Europe,  
as the Plague raged and the dead  
carts rolled. I had to travel so  
quickly...from town to town, country  
to country, in a wagon drawn by a  
slat-thin horse with burning eyes  
and a tongue black as a killer's  
heart.

Holy Jesus. Gaunt's come around the counter, put the gun  
in Hugh's hand, put his arm around Hugh's neck and started  
to walk this broken man toward the door...

## GAUNT

In those bygone days, Hugh, I sold  
my wares not from a cozy little shop  
like this, no, no, but from the back  
of a cold damp wagon. And I was  
always gone before my customers  
could ever discover what they'd  
really bought.

The open door. Gaunt releases Hugh into the rainy night.

## GAUNT

But even then...I always gave them  
weapons.

Hugh backpedals a step...and bumps into Polly!

## GAUNT

Goodnight, Hugh. Good luck.

Hugh Priest edging away as Leland Gaunt turns now, without  
a beat skipped, to Polly. Another lost soul seeking  
shelter from the storm.

## GAUNT

Next.

## INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - NIGHT

Gaunt closes and locks the door behind Polly. She won't  
turn toward him, can't bring herself to do it, even when  
his fingers play with her hair...

## GAUNT

I have to go upstairs. I have a  
rather urgent phone call to make.

## INT. KEETON HOUSE - NIGHT

Blood-spattered, shattered, adrift in the universe, Dan  
Keeton lurches into his kitchen, goes to the sink, tries to

wasn his foul fists...handcuffs clanking against porcelain when the PHONE RINGS. Keeton jerks sharply toward it, yanks up the receiver!

KEETON

Who are you?

INT. GAUNT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

GAUNT

It's me, Dan. Your Master's Voice.  
How's it going?

We're so close to Gaunt that for a moment all we can see are his nose, those lips, the flick of his tongue...LET'S INTERCUT...

KEETON

I killed my wife. Was that wrong?  
I didn't mean to...

GAUNT

Did she deserve it?

KEETON

I don't know. I loved her.

Gaunt looks across the room...Polly. She's climbed the stairs, as he knew she would, come into his apartment. He gestures toward the sofa...such a gracious host.

GAUNT

There are those times when you must hurt the ones you love. And I just can't picture Danforth Keeton doing something to somebody who didn't deserve it. You're not that kinda guy, are you?

KEETON

I don't know anymore...

GAUNT

Get ahold of yourself, Dan. This isn't good, all this self pity. You better hop in your car and come see me.

KEETON

Right now?

GAUNT

No time like the present.

Gaunt hangs up...chuckles.

GAUNT

Humanity! So noble! So willing to  
sacrifice the other fellow.

He turns to Polly. She hasn't sat down at all but  
instead's found a corner, backed into it.

GAUNT

You don't look happy. The pain may  
be gone, but I warn you, Polly,  
blessings like mine won't work for  
long when people aren't happy.

POLLY

What are you? Please tell me.

Gaunt comes toward her.

GAUNT

You don't want things to go back to  
the way they were, do you?

POLLY

No...

GAUNT

Because they could hop from bad to  
worse.

Closer...

POLLY

Yes...

GAUNT

Because nobody understands. Not  
even the Sheriff, that little thief.  
He doesn't know what it's like to  
wake up at two in the morning with  
hell in his hands, does he?

Polly shakes her head. There are tears on her cheeks as  
the distance closes between them, as the walls close in  
upon her in this dark, terrible place...

GAUNT

Do as I say and you'll never have to  
wake up that way again, Polly.

He moves closer...

GAUNT

softly)

Because when everything else is gone, is a young woman at least not entitled to her pride? The coin without which her purse is entirely empty....?

Gaunt's shadow is upon her, blocking out what little light seeps in from the lamp posts on Main.

POLLY

Oh, please...

The words fall somewhere between a prayer and a brave new choice...

GAUNT

I don't know what makes me sicker  
...a crying woman or a laughing man.

Such sweetness swimming through Gaunt's venom as his thumbs clear the tears from Polly's cheeks and his moist lips brush against hers and coax from Polly a kiss so hideously wrong we dare not watch. And then it's over. And Polly's lost to him.

GAUNT

There are more kinds of hell than one, aren't there, Polly? But at least I'll always tell you the truth.

From his jacket, a handkerchief.

GAUNT

Wipe your face. Go home. You have things to do, I'm sure. As do I.

Gaunt's edged back, given Polly room to breathe, but there seems so little air as she steps past him...

GAUNT

Polly.

She stops, keeps her back to the Devil.

GAUNT

I want you to know it's been a great pleasure doing business with you. I have always so enjoyed ladies who take pride in themselves.



EXT. THE MELLOW TIGER - NIGHT

The joint's closing, the LAST CUSTOMERS leaving, driving off in their pickups. A foot encased in a scuffed yellow workboot steps into FRAME, crunching gravel.

INT. THE MELLOW TIGER - NIGHT

Henry Beaufort. All alone in his bar, closing out his register, sipping a beer. The TV drones on...a SHADOW ripples the rain-spattered glass from outside.

EXT. TOWN COMMON - NIGHT

CRUNCH again. Louder as a shovel grinds into the earth. Someone's digging in the downpour. Dan Keeton. Digging a hole in the lawn right out front of Reverend Rose's church. Under one of those spectacular old maples. A grave? For Myrtle?

DISTANT GUNSHOTS RING OUT. Dan pauses only a moment...then throws down his shovel and opens a crumpled old grocery bag. His trembling hands remove a crude device snarled with wire leads, slender cylinders of plastique...and a digital timer. It's a bomb, a thing so inherently explosive we sense its destructive power in a flash. Carefully, Dan sets it in the muddy hole he's dug at the base of that tree...begging forgiveness with a mumbled...

KEETON

...Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray  
for us sinners, now and at the hour  
of our death, AMEN!

The last word's a shout! Because there's a hand on Dan's shoulder. Bony fingers coming from behind.

GAUNT

Who were you talkin' to there, Danny  
boy?

KEETON

God...just God...

GAUNT

On my time?

And Gaunt's upon him, those long, ugly hands seize ol' Dan by the shirt front and lift him into the air, hold him against the rough bark of that maple...

KEETON

I'm scared, that's all I'm telling  
you, I'm scared...

GAUNT

You tell me NOTHING! I tell you  
EVERYTHING!

Gaunt snaps him forward, snaps him back. Bonks Dan's head  
off the tree trunk.

GAUNT

They have it coming, Dan. You know  
They do.

KEETON

Yes! Yes! Yes! So why don't you  
just crush Them all, right now,  
right away? Split the earth wide  
open...

GAUNT

Because I can't work miracles.

Gaunt extends his hand toward the shovel Dan's thrown down,  
and the tool just flies up to meet his grip!

GAUNT

I'm not the Father, Son and the Holy  
Ghost, Dan. I'm just one guy.

Gaunt takes that shovel together with the Head Selectman  
and drops them both to the damp earth at the base of the  
second great maple.

GAUNT

Dig.

There's only a heartbeat before Keeton obeys...Gaunt  
watching him toil for a moment...

GAUNT

You're disgusting, Dan. I like that  
in a person.

INT. SMALL HOUSE - NIGHT

Alan Pangborn. The man is alone. He's sitting in a chair,  
clicking his television on/off/on/off with a remote, no  
sound, just flashes of light. THE PHONE RINGS, and Alan  
answers it so fast we don't see his hand move.

ALAN

Who is it? Polly?

EXT. THE MELLOW TIGER - NIGHT

It's Norris Ridgewick. Dawn's breaking, and the rain's let up. Norris is standing at a pay phone in the parking lot, his squad car behind him, its dome light revolving.

NORRIS

You better come over to the Tiger,  
Alan. Henry Beaufort and Hugh  
Priest shot each other up pretty  
bad.

(pause)

Plus Buster escaped. I blew it  
royal.

EXT. KEETON HOUSE - DAWN

Guess you did, Norris. We're looking at the Keeton garage. The door's closed, but there's a ribbon of blood running out underneath it, working its way down the slope of the Keeton drive and beginning to pool up thick and dark as it soaks into a freshly delivered morning edition of The Castle Rock Call:

TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT  
A LITTLE BIT OF LAS VEGAS  
COMES TO TOWN

There's a picture of Father Brigham at a roulette table.

INT. THE MELLOW TIGER - DAY

Another double massacre. Alan's here, looking down at Hugh Priest and Henry Beaufort. And Hugh's jacket? Nothing special now. Just some ratty old thing from another high school in another state.

NORRIS

Near as we can figure, Hugh came in,  
had a gun, so did Henry. That  
shotgun there, an' probably what...

Alan's gone. Back outside.

EXT. THE MELLOW TIGER - DAY

A small crowd's gathered, and John LaPointe's busy being a human police line. Alan looks at the townspeople. They're broken up into suspicious little knots, talking amongst themselves...eyeing him. What? Like it's his fault?

ALAN

I'm sorry. I'm trying to make it  
stop.

RUTH ROBERTS

How?

Alan sees something. An old station wagon parked on the perimeter of the lot. He starts walking toward it... through the bystanders, past Hugh Priest's Buick with those slashed tires...

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Watching Alan approach...looking out past that silver bell dangling again from the vehicle's rearview.

GAUNT'S VOICE

Hop aboard.

Alan opens the door, gets into the passenger seat.

ALAN

Where is she?

GAUNT

It doesn't matter where she is.  
Going on with her life. Without  
you. She doesn't believe in you  
anymore, Alan. She believes in me.

ALAN

The Devil's voice is sweet to hear.

A most dangerous game...and Gaunt's got the rule book.

GAUNT

You're very tired, Alan. You're  
confused. And you're frightened. I  
wouldn't go around saying anything  
crazy to all those people out there.  
They might put you away for good.

ALAN

I want her back, Gaunt.

GAUNT

Why? Say it. Just say it.

Knowing perfectly well the trap that's set:

ALAN

I need her.

GAUNT

What? The man who needs nothing?

ALAN

You turned her against me. You took her away...

GAUNT

But I'll give her back. For a price.

Alan pounces, moves with such ferocity that for a second Gaunt's stunned, but for only a second, grabbing Alan's holstered revolver and hurling him backward against the door in one fluid, powerful eruption! Then so quietly, with the gun to Alan's temple, with a hand on Alan's throat as the SILVER BELL tinkles from his rearview...

GAUNT

You know what the Good Book says,  
"Ye shall reap what ye sow." You  
know what the Bad Book says?  
"Before ye sow, get ye some cow  
shit." Two sides of the same coin,  
Al. You can't win because I make  
Him look good. Because in His  
Infinite Wisdom He tolerates my  
little shenanigans. A famine here,  
a flood there. A little blood lust.  
A broken heart. So get off my case,  
copper, I'm just the fall guy...  
(cock that pistol)  
...what do I care if it rains or  
storms...  
(sing that song)  
I've got my love to keep me warm.

ALAN

If you wanna destroy us...why not  
just do it? Go ahead.

Gaunt could. He's holding all the cards, no?

GAUNT

The truth?

He withdraws the pistol. Let's go his grip on Alan's  
throat.

GAUNT

It's no fun. Shooting ants with a  
shotgun. But instead, if I just  
poke a little toothpick down their  
hole...stir a little bit...they go  
crazy.

He tosses the gun into Alan's lap!

GAUNT

And I can watch for hours. Until I  
get bored.

NORRIS

Alan?

There he is again, right on cue, right at the passenger  
window.

NORRIS

We just got word on the radio.  
Myrtle Keeton's dead. Somebody  
bashed her around with a hammer.  
What if it was Buster?

Gaunt and Alan...looking at each other.

ALAN

Not now, Norris.

NORRIS

Huh?

ALAN

Get outta here.

Norris and Gaunt...looking at each other. That thing Alan  
said..."He's a monster"...it comes flooding back to the  
deputy.

NORRIS

Hey, okay, whatever.

Gone. Alan and Gaunt. Alone again.

GAUNT

I need a favor, Alan. Nothing  
enormous. But then I'd talk to  
Polly. On your behalf. Correct  
those ugly misconceptions.

(pause)

All you have to do is eliminate  
someone for me.

INT. THE DOT - DAY

It may seem like business as usual, but of course, it's  
not. There's the regular breakfast crowd, and Myra's  
serving them...and Polly's cooking and helping Myra,  
refreshing Frank Jewett's coffee...

...and Alan's standing outside, looking in through the  
venetian blinds. Polly lifts her eyes his way...stares  
right through him.

EXT. THE DOT - DAY

Alan. It's as though, for her, he doesn't exist. A SILVER BELL TINKLES from beyond...an unreal sound that...

INT. CATHOLIC RECTORY - MORNING

...dies out in Father Brigham's study where the old priest sits at his desk with a jeweler's loop, admiring a small chalice. The object's extraordinary, maybe priceless, and when there's a knock on his door...

FATHER BRIGHAM

One moment.

...he rushes to conceal it in a crumpled old grocery sack.

FATHER BRIGHAM

Come in, please.

FATHER MITCHELL

Sheriff Pangborn's here to see you, Father. He says it's very important.

Alan's right behind the young priest, and in a moment he's alone with Father Brigham, the door closing behind them.

FATHER BRIGHAM

If this is about tonight, Alan...

ALAN

No.

FATHER BRIGHAM

Are you okay? You look...

ALAN

I'm not a particularly religious man, Father.

An awkward, troubling start, everything about Alan's manner making us quite uneasy as he sits opposite the old priest.

ALAN

I mean I don't know what I believe exactly. I used to think it didn't matter as long as you did the decent thing.

FATHER BRIGHAM

As long as you do, it doesn't. Don't say I said that. What do you hear from the Baptists? Are they

(more)

FATHER BRIGHAM (CONTD)

gonna give us some real trouble  
tonight. do you think?

Alan's drawing his revolver, slowly and out of Father  
Brigham's sightline...

ALAN

Do you believe in the Devil, Father?

So odd...the priest's concern deepening by the second...as  
Alan shakes, sweats...

FATHER BRIGHAM

I guess I have to. Can't have one  
without the other. Alan, if you...

ALAN

What's he look like?

Alan's gun is out, aimed under Father Brigham's desk, aimed  
at Father Brigham. and Alan is quietly easing the hammer  
back...

FATHER BRIGHAM

He looks like you and me, I imagine.

This is very difficult. Almost impossible.

ALAN

And so sometimes it's too late  
before we know what's going on, and  
his claws are already in us, and we  
have to do things that horrify us  
just to get back to where we were  
and make him go away...don't we?

FATHER BRIGHAM

No, I don't think so, Alan.

ALAN

Yes, we do, goddamnit!

Click. The hammer cocks. We heard it...because we were  
listening. Not Father Brigham.

ALAN

I love Polly, Father.

FATHER BRIGHAM

Well, I hope so...you're engaged to  
be married.

ALAN

Not anymore.



Alan's finger tightens on the trigger...the priest leans forward...

FATHER BRIGHAM

I'm sorry...when...

ALAN

It's gonna be okay, don't worry.

There's an EXPLOSION! And for a second we think it's Alan's gun, then we know it's not. It was outside, some distance away...

EXT. TOWN COMMON - DAY

There's smoke rising from the base of one of those great maples out front of Reverend Rose's First Baptist church ...and the tree is groaning, the ground around its trunk ripped to hell...and now the tree is toppling, night-marishly taking itself down, wrenching its burning root system out as it comes!

A SECOND EXPLOSION erupts beneath the other old giant! The earth heaves and smokes and now the second tree starts to fall...

...as Reverend Rose rushes outside...to be covered by the shadow of that first falling maple! He leaps from its path as the trunk hits his church! Now the second tree comes at him, knocks him sideways with its topmost branches in a shower of blood-red leaves! Apocalyptic stuff, the earth shaking, throwing up burning roots and a smoke that rises from hell itself...

INT. OUR LADY OF THE SERENE WATERS - DAY

A stained glass window of the Blessed Virgin. There one second, gone the next as A BRICK CRASHES THROUGH FROM OUTSIDE!

EXT. OUR LADY OF THE SERENE WATERS - DAY

Dan Keeton. He did it. And now he hurls a second brick through another big window, and then he runs! His Caddy's parked not far away, and Dan makes it to the driver's seat before any of the priests or Eddie Warburton can get outside and spot the culprit.

EXT. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

People help Reverend Rose to his feet. He's stunned, cut up and bruised.

LESTER PRATT

Look!

There's something on the trunks of those trees...placards, nailed crudely to the bark. CASINO NITE POSTERS.

INT. OUR LADY OF THE SERENE WATERS - DAY

Father Mitchell crunches into the broken glass, retrieves one of those bricks. The thing is wrapped in paper, and as Father Brigham rushes in the younger priest turns to reveal what he's found. A shiny bumper sticker. "SAY NO TO THE DEVIL."

FATHER MITCHELL

Goddamn Baptists.

INT. OUR LADY OF THE SERENE WATERS - MORNING

Alan Pangborn steps from the rectory, his pistol forgotten in his hand. The church parking lot is scattered with parishioners who until moments ago had been putting the final touches on their Casino Nite booths, erecting a gaudy little gamblers' carnival on the tarmac. But now, with those bricks, all bets are off...

FATHER BRIGHAM

Alan!

The priest is coming out of his church, furious, rabid, waving that Baptist sticker while SIRENS SCREAM in the distance, and a crowd envelopes him...as Alan just keeps walking away from it all, heading toward Main Street.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

The Sheriff's on foot, coming up the sidewalk as people rush here and there spreading rumors and fear...

VOICES

...on fire! The Catholics bombed it! Now Father Brigham's been shot!

ALAN

No...that's not true...

It doesn't matter anymore, does it? Up ahead one man shoves another...a car speeds by, swerves, sideswiping a parked van. Alan grabs the running assailant who's just hit his neighbor...

ALAN

Frank, why?

It's Frank Jewett, high school principal, his eyes feral...

FRANK JEWETT

The son of a bitch laughed!

And Jewett breaks free!

INT. THE DOT - DAY

Polly and Myra...their last customer rushing outside as figures dart back and forth on the sidewalk, and then a lady screams! Myra digs at her purse, yanks out a pistol!

POLLY

No!

MYRA

What if they come in here?!

CRASH! The Dot's front window! Someone just hurled a grocery bag straight through it...

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Alan keeps walking, his town churning around him. He moves up the dead center of Main, heading for Needful Things...

...BUT SOMEBODY'S WATCHING HIM, LIFTING A RIFLE INTO FRAME, AND TRACKING ALAN AS...a vehicle stumbles between them, a Sheriff's car.

NORRIS

Get in, Alan, get in! Them Baptists are goin' nuts, we got the fire department over there!

A rock! It hits Norris' car. He catches a glimpse of the perpetrator running away...

NORRIS

Was that Buster?! That son of a bitch!

Norris blasts off in pursuit! Alan turns back toward Needful Things...THE RIFLE FOLLOWING HIM. That bumper sticker Alan saw upstairs? There's another one in Gaunt's empty window now too, taunting him: "Support Your Local..." BANG!! A RIFLE BLASTS from across the street, and a chunk of brick cracks out from the wall of Needful Things! Alan hits the sidewalk, rolling fast, coming up with his weapon aimed square at...

...Dan Keeton. On the other side of Main. Keeton staring at Alan over a rifle as people run between them...and a car almost hits two crazy kids on a motorcycle...

...and by the time it all clears, there's no sign of Alan's would-be assassin any more, and anyway Alan's attention's been drawn down the block toward the town common...

...where a crowd's just appeared, turning a corner and coming his way. A Baptist crowd, Reverend Rose in the lead, but the thing's disorganized really, a rabby collection of vengeful citizens armed with all manner of weaponry...a baseball bat, a tire iron, rocks...

A man runs past Alan! Right toward the approaching crowd! He gets about twenty yards from Reverend Rose and pulls out a gun! People scatter! Alan charges! Blindsides the guy! And the mob coalesces, surges forward while Alan wrestles the gunman...Eddie Warburton!

ALAN

Stop it, Eddie! Stop it!

But Eddie won't, he's fighting like an animal, and two Baptists are there in a flash, ahead of the crowd, kicking Eddie off Alan! Eddie scrambles on his hands and knees, beating a retreat back toward...

...a crowd of Catholics! They've appeared at the other end of Main...armed as primitively as the Baptists. Alan climbs to his feet between them as the two sides hesitate, get their backs up like a pair of ferocious cats...

FATHER BRIGHAM

Rose! In the name of Christ, man,  
beg for His mercy!

This, of course, serving only to elicit catcalls and jeers! A tire iron zings past Alan, bounces threateningly toward the Catholics...

REVEREND ROSE

Be struck down by his Almighty Swift  
Sword, you godless heathen, Brigham!

EDDIE

Rot in hell, Steamboat Willie!

The Baptists start moving, not as one, but awkwardly, emboldened by the most bloodthirsty among them...

ALAN

HOLD IT!

Alan's got his revolver aimed right at the Baptists! And now he realizes it. The move was instinctive, and it's frozen the Baptists in their tracks...

...so a few Catholics start forward behind Alan. He spins around, his weapon coming with him, having the same effect on the Catholics. Alan's breathing hard now, his hand shaking as he sights over his barrel directly at Father Brigham.

GAUNT'S VOICE

Do it, Alan, for God sakes will you just do it?

Alan turns. Leland Gaunt smiling in a doorway.

GAUNT

Otherwise, how the hell can I possibly go tell your precious little Polly that it was all just a terrible misunderstanding? Lookit her. What's she going to think?

Alan can see Polly. She's just across the street, with Myra on The Dot's front porch. And the whole town's watching...a breath away from exploding...as that Sheriff's car comes back fast down Laurel, stops thirty feet from Alan...Norris jumping out...

NORRIS

I lost him again!

FATHER BRIGHAM

Get out of the way, Alan. We don't pay you to protect Baptists.

Father Brigham comes forward...his troops following...

REVEREND ROSE

Baptists don't need protection, not from a nest of unholy vipers!

Someone smashes another store window, this time with a baseball bat, and just for the hell of it.

NORRIS

Hey, I saw that, you moron!

GAUNT

All this bickering, this childish name calling, for God sakes, Alan, doesn't it just make you wanna puke?

Gaunt's voice so low and pointed that only Alan can hear it.

ALAN

Listen to me. all of you. whatever  
this sounds like. it's true. This  
man here, Leland Gaunt. he's some  
kind of fiend...

Alan's pistol's off Father Brigham now, pointing at Gaunt,  
not to shoot him, but to indict him...

ALAN

He came here to help us destroy  
ourselves!

VOICE

Don't blame the stranger, Pangborn!  
Gambling's a sin!

Alan looks at the man who said that. The guy's got a 2 x 4  
in his fist.

ALAN

Hey, maybe it is. You want my gun,  
Jim? You wanna go kill Eddie  
Warburton? Here. How about Ruth  
Roberts?

Alan's coming right toward this guy Jim...

ALAN

You wanna go shoot Ruth in the face?  
Stop her betting two bucks for a  
pumpkin pie?

But Jim's afraid to take Alan's pistol...so Alan offers it  
to Reverend Rose instead.

ALAN

Here. Go kill Father Brigham.  
That'll solve everything. Go shoot  
him in the throat like Hugh did to  
Henry.

Alan turns fast...right at Polly up at The Dot...

ALAN

Got any knives in there? Bring 'em  
out so we can all chop each other up  
like Nettie and Wilma. That's what  
he wants!

Gaunt shakes his head sadly, lamenting the sheriff's  
insanity...

ALAN

He wants all of us to kill each other! All us little human fuse boxes, lined up side by side...so he hotwires Wilma Jerzyck to Nettie Cobb, but he does it with wires from two other fuse boxes, Brian Rusk and whoever killed Raider. Because Wilma didn't. Did she, Pete?

PETE

No, sir.

Pete standing thick with the Catholics. Gaunt looks up, sees Dan Keeton, locks eyes with Keeton who moves along the rooftop above Needful Things with his rifle...

ALAN

He makes us hurt each other, he cross-wires all the rest of us the same way he did Nettie and Wilma. Father Brigham and Reverend Rose, Buster Keeton and Norris Ridgewick...

Norris. He's frightened, without a clue how to handle any of this...

ALAN

Alan Pangborn and Polly Chalmers...

Alan whips around toward Polly again, his arm extended and finger pointing so intensely her way that for a moment there's only the two of them left in the universe.

VOICE

He made me go steal Mr. Jewett's checkbook.

A miracle. A kid no more than fourteen. She just piped up, and it made Polly start.

ALAN

Frank? What'd he make you do? How about you, Nancy? I heard about that pretty ring you bought. What'd it cost?

GAUNT

You know something, Sheriff?

ALAN

YES, I KNOW SOMETHING, MR. GAUNT! I know you keep heating things up, hotter and hotter, then you turn on  
(more)

ALAN (CONTD)

the juice. wherever you are. you  
turn on the juice and you get people  
to hate each other. kill each other  
...wherever you are.

(to the crowds)

And now he's here! And it's hotter  
than...

THE BULLET HITS ALAN, SPINS HIM AROUND VIOLENTLY IN THE  
ROAD!

For a second no one moves. As if the thing didn't even  
happen, couldn't possibly have happened. Then Norris  
starts forward to help...

KEETON

DON'T!

Castle Rock's Head Selectman. He's up high, handcuffs  
dangling from his wrist as he comes down an exterior  
stairway, his rifle aiming at Norris, then at the  
Catholics, then the Baptists. then back at Norris as he  
reaches street level...

...and Polly runs right past him to Alan.

KEETON

Is he dead? Did I finally get the  
bastard?

Polly's kneeling close to Alan. He's on his stomach, and  
his eyes are open. He's alive...a tight whisper.

ALAN

Say, "Yes"...

KEETON

Did I?!

POLLY

Yes!

Keeton shoves her aside, sticks his rifle muzzle down into  
the back of Alan's neck...seems to be deciding for himself  
as he probes and stabs at Alan with the barrel...

KEETON

Ring leader...ring leader...

Slowly, Norris draws his pistol. People are frozen,  
terrified. No one wants to be here any more, but no one  
dares move as now Keeton turns toward them...finds Reverend  
Rose...



KEETON

Slew up your goddamn trees. Reverend Willie...

Keeton opens his jacket. Those explosive devices. He's got several more of them wired to his chest. He shows them to the crowd...to Norris.

KEETON

...an' now I'm gonna blow up your goddamn town.

There's an audible shiver...it passes through the assembled and makes them move, enough to frighten Keeton who swings his rifle up and waves it around at everyone he can...

NORRIS

Keep 'er calm, folks. Don't give him a reason.

KEETON

I got a reason, you little shit! I got a lifetime of reasons!

GAUNT

Then just shut up and do it!

eyes move to Gaunt...while Alan looks at Keeton from low angle on the ground, gauges the distance...

GAUNT

Sorry, sorry. I always do that, poke my two cents in. Just can't resist the temptation.

RUTH ROBERTS

Because you're the Devil!

deep in the Catholic throng.

RUTH ROBERTS

He is, Father Brigham, I know it.

springs up! Slams into Keeton's back! The rifle goes Keeton goes down, Alan on top of him! Norris lunges! Priest charges! A Catholic charges! But Keeton's a animal butting and kicking free for a second, long enough to get his fingers on those detonators!

ALAN

Go ahead. He made you kill Myrtle. Now do what he says and kill us.

KEETON

Nobody made me do anything! Right?!

Keeton springs forward, a rogue elephant, charging so suddenly that even Gaunt's taken by surprise, hit broadside by the Head Selectman and carried with him right through the front window of Needful Things! A shower of glass and then a monstrous KAAABBBB000000MMMM!!!

Alan. Polly. Norris. Father Brigham. Reverend Rose. The earth still shaking beneath them as the dust starts to settle.

INT. NEEDFUL THINGS - DAY

Or what was Needful Things. Now it's charred, smoking timber. Alan comes in carefully, Norris not far behind ...the crowds curious enough to...

NORRIS

Stay back, all of you! This could be dangerous.

(stumbling!)

It's okay, I'm okay...

No bodies anywhere. Not an earthly trace. Except for Alan's handcuffs, the ones he clamped on Keeton. They're on the floor now. Empty. No Dan. Alan picks them up, drops them! They're hot as hell.

GAUNT

What can I say? You win some, you lose some.

He's standing there in a shaft of smoky sunlight, spotless in the ruins of his store.

GAUNT

This is not my best work, I'll admit it. But what the heck, I'll be back. You know that, Alan, don't you? If not this year, then next year. If not next year...whenever.

ALAN

Not this town. Not while I'm here.

The two of them...handling each other...as Gaunt starts to walk slowly through the rubble...

GAUNT

In the meantime, you and Polly, you're two terrific kids, you're gonna get married, trust me. She's a swell gal, Al.

NORRIS

Alan...he's getting away...

GAUNT

And you're gonna have a swell family. So remember me to your grandson. Bob'll be his name. International trade his game. I'll see him in Jakarta in two thousand fifty three, August the fourteenth.  
(stepping out back)  
Ten a.m. A nice sunny day. It's in the cards.

Gaunt's old station wagon's out there, and that's where he's heading...clearing debris from its path, getting inside the car...

NORRIS

Holy shit, Alan, can't we stop him?

ALAN

We did.

Alan steps outside...yards from Leland Gaunt as Gaunt shifts into first. Eyeball to eyeball...worthy adversaries. A decent man and the Devil.

ALAN

Why us?

A moment passes...before Gaunt manages a smile...

GAUNT

Why not?

...and then a laugh as his car rockets off!

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

The crowds mingling, helping each other, consoling each other, some kind of community again...even Reverend Rose and Father Brigham as...

...Alan and Norris emerge from the ruins of Needful Things. And Alan sees Polly. The two of them separated by enough distance and enough people to scare us as Polly looks at Alan for much too long...before she comes forward through the townspeople and hesitates for only a second before she lifts her arm toward him, revealing a necklace in her hand...a trinket, really, just a cheap gold locket on a thin chain.

ALAN

What is it?

POLLY

Nothing. Can I have my ring back?

There's a tremble in her voice...Alan and Polly looking at each other for a moment...before she rushes toward him, holds him tight.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

THE BYRDS

To everything, turn, turn...  
There is a season, turn, turn,  
And a time to every purpose  
under heaven...

A MOVING POV...perhaps from an automobile...a glorious fall day in New England gliding by quite lyrically, just a breath slower than reality, intoxicating us...AND THEN THE SCREEN TURNS BLACK AND TITLES ROLL.

THE END